# BIBLE HISTORY

PRICE AND ROBERTSON

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KEYSTONE
STANDARD TRAINING COURSE

# OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

## (*Airplane View*)

*By* IRA M. PRICE

A REQUIRED UNIT OF
THE GENERAL TRAINING COURSES

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TEACHER'S TEXT-BOOK

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# LESSON I

# THE HOMELAND OF THE HEBREWS

**Palestine** is a land of fascinating interest. For a thousand years its hills, valleys, and plains, its springs, rivers, and seas formed the scenery of the stage on which the Hebrews played their game of life. Its peculiar location compelled them to mingle with the other nations of their day, and thus to become a part of the great seething peoples of the ancient world.

"Palestine" was the name given to the land by the Israelites, but was a Greek form of the name "Philistine," the enemy of the Jews. The Romans called it "Palestina," and through them it became the prevailing name for the ancient homeland of the Hebrews. The earlier name attached to it was "Canaan," probably derived from the so-called Canaanites, whom Israel found in possession of it.

## THE LIMITS

Palestine lies on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and stretches eastward to the desert of Arabia. Its northern boundary-line may be drawn along the southern base of Mount Hermon and the rushing Litany river as it flows westward into the Mediterranean Sea. The southern line may pass from the southern end of Philistia eastward, along the irregular line between the low-lying hills of Judea and the south country, to a point a little south of the Dead Sea. To be exact, Palestine is confined between thirty-three degrees thirty seconds north latitude, and thirty-four degrees and thirty-seven degrees east longitude. In area it covers about one hundred miles east and west, and about one hundred and forty miles north and south, or about one-fourth of the area of the State of Illinois.

## THE EXPOSURES

Palestine's boundaries were not high, inaccessible mountain ranges, or dangerous, rocky seacoasts. On the west it was

open to any daring seaman who wished to land on its fruitful plains. On the east the thirsty sands of the desert did not shut out the bands of wandering Arabs with their hungry flocks. The south and southwest gates were always open to the ambitious kings and armies of Egypt. The rock-ribbed mountains, Lebanon and Hermon, with their glistening snow-caps, were not an impregnable wall to the conquering armies of Assyria and Babylonia, as they viewed from afar the glories of the empire of Egypt. Many a time in history these hosts poured down along the seashore, or through the mountain valleys across Palestine, attracted by the wealth of the kings of the Nile.

## THE FOUR PARALLELS

The north and south parallels of Palestine are: (1) Sea-coast, (2) the western plateau or backbone, (3) the Jordan Valley, and (4) the east Jordan highlands. The plains on the coast range from twenty-five miles to a mile in width, and are pierced with mountain ranges that reach to the Mediterranean Sea: (1) At Mount Carmel, and (2) at the Ladder of Tyre, about fifteen miles below the city of Tyre.

The coast plains are the garden spots of the country.

**1. The first and most famous is that on which the Philistines landed from their pirate ships and settled long ages ago.** This lowland spreads southward along the sea from Joppa about forty miles, and reaches eastward about twenty miles to the foothills of Judah. The plain of Sharon, north of Joppa, is twelve miles wide at that city and reaches to Mount Carmel, where it contracts to one-half that width. It is well watered and very productive, with such fruits as oranges, apricots, figs, plums, bananas, grapes, olives, almonds, and many others.

Between Mount Carmel and the Ladder of Tyre the little plain of Acre stretches its ten miles of width at the south and narrows to five at the Ladder. North of this rocky headland the so-called plain of Tyre is merely a ribbon of low coast-land, never more than a mile wide, reaching to the city famous in all Phœnician history, the present remnant of the once leading commercial center of the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

**2. The western plateau is the southern extension of the mountain range of which the Lebanons are the highest points.** It was on this plateau that Israel settled and forti-

fied herself during the crucial periods of her history. Galilee, though within narrow limits, commanded the southern slopes of Lebanon and the fertile fields between the Mediterranean Sea and the head-waters of the Jordan. The plain of Esdraelon lies just north of Carmel, and is a triangular terrace two hundred feet above sea-level, that stretches from the Mediterranean Sea to the plain of Jezreel, extending fifteen miles to the Jordan Valley, one of the richest areas in the country. This Esdraelon was one of the greatest battlefields in history. The Lebanon range is still farther projected southward by the hills of Samaria, and the rugged uplands of Judah, and the southern foothills of Beer-sheba.

Along this backbone Israel's armies marched, her merchants traveled, and the caravans of foreign peoples carried their lines of salable goods. On its heights were built Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom, and Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. In these cities were enacted some of the greatest tragedies of the history of Israel.

**3. The third parallel physical zone of Palestine is the Jordan Valley.** It is the one feature of the country that commands universal attention. Some time back in the geological history of the land a huge crack, or fault, reaching from Mount Hermon to the Dead Sea and beyond, took place. This huge rift became filled with water, which gradually, through volcanic action extending through ages, settled down to its present form. The beginning of this wonderful valley may be called the upper Jordan, reaching south to the Sea of Galilee. At the southwest base of Mount Hermon, at Banias, is found one of the two great sources of the Jordan. A noisy stream gushes from beneath the rocks and starts on its way to the Dead Sea. A few miles to the west of Banias, at Tel-el-Kadi, is the largest and finest source of the Jordan. A stream of crystal-clear water, eight or ten feet wide and nearly a foot deep, pours out of a rock and rushes on to join its companion source from Banias. This mound, now a mass of ruins, was probably the Canaanite city of Laish, or Dan.

The union of these two and other streams flows through a basin and marshes to Lake Huleh ("Merom" in Josh. 11 : 7). This lake is a kind of marsh about four miles wide and a few feet above sea-level. From Huleh the Jordan plunges in nine miles six hundred and ninety feet in its rush toward the Sea of Galilee. This choice body of fresh water is pear-shaped, the stem of the pear pointing north; it is twelve and

a half miles long and about eight wide. The east shore is guarded by rocky cliffs hundreds of feet high, while on the other shores the land tapers down to the water's edge. Its pearly waters, its great depth, its six hundred and ninety feet below sea-level, its tropical fruits and hot springs, make it in winter and spring a garden-spot of the earth.

From the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea is sixty-six miles in a straight line. But the Jordan River in its windings and turnings covers nearly two hundred miles in a fall of six hundred and ten feet. The valley named after its river varies in width from three to eight miles. The character of the soil is reflected in the muddy, roily water that turns and swirls in its rush to the sea. Its peculiar swiftness, narrowness, shallowness in places, turnings and treachery make any regular navigation impossible.

The Jordan River pours about six million tons of fresh water daily into the Dead Sea. In the Old Testament the Dead Sea was called " The Sea," " The Sea of the Plain," " The Eastern Sea," " The Salt Sea." Its surface lies 1,292 feet below the surface of the Mediterranean Sea, the lowest known place on the earth's surface. It is forty-seven and one-half miles long, and ten miles at its greatest width. Its depth, wonderful to tell, is 1,278 feet in the northeastern end; that is, 2,570 feet, or nearly one-half mile, below sea-level. Its waters are so poisoned with dissolved chemicals, about twenty-four per cent, that nothing but the lowest organisms can live in them. The water is bitter with the solution of chloride of magnesium, and the oily character is due to chloride of calcium.

The Dead Sea has no outlet except by evaporation. The intense heat of the summer, sometimes as high as one hundred and eighteen degrees Fahrenheit, and the dryness of the atmosphere furnish an outlet for this sea. It is estimated that the air evaporates and carries away daily on its wings from six to eight million tons of water out of this great basin.

The eastern shore of this sea is protected by the cliffs of Moab, which rise from 2,500 to 3,000 feet above the surface of the water. The south shore is low and marshy and malarial, and covered with tropical shrubbery, in which birds and animals find their hiding-places. The western shore is not so rocky as the east side, except in two places.

Its name, surroundings, and character leave a weird impression on the visitor's mind that years cannot erase.

**4. The fourth physical parallel is an elevated plateau averaging nearly two thousand feet above sea-level.** It is an extension of the Hermon Mountains, tapering off into wooded highlands and pastures for flocks and herds. Its climate is colder than that of the hills west of the Jordan. More than that, it surpasses the west side in the abundance of its springs and never-failing streams. The best grain-fields of Palestine and the choicest pasture-lands are found on these highlands. The successive subdivisions named from north to south are: (1) Jaulan, reaching as far as the Jarmuk River; (2) Gilead, famous for its fields and forests; (3) the plateau of Moab, sixty by thirty miles, lying at the top of the rocky east shore of the Dead Sea; (4) southern Moab and Edom, continuing toward the south in the mountains of Seir and Edom.

The East-Jordan territory naturally attracted the desert peoples, who brought with them their customs, manners, religion, and life. Israel's attempt to make of the Gileadites a strong people shows her wisdom, for without such a buffer state her security was in jeopardy.

## THE CLIMATE

Palestine has a semitropical climate. Its variations of heat and cold are dependent on its differences in elevation, ranging from the floor of the Jordan Valley, 1,292 feet below sea-level, to the top of El-Asur, near Bethel, 3,318 feet above the sea, or about 4,600 feet. Its chief characteristic is the division of the year into two seasons, sharply distinguished from each other. The contrasts are named "seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter" (Gen. 8 : 22). The summer is dry, hot, and rainless; and the winter wet, chilly, and disagreeable.

Palestine, on account of the difference in altitudes, has samples of three climates: (1) Tropical, in the Jordan Valley; (2) semitropical, on the seacoast; (3) temperate, on the backbone or hills of the country. The location of the country relative to the Mediterranean Sea, the dry, hot deserts of the east, and the Jordan Valley basin determine in large part its winds, its rainfall, and its seasons.

The mean annual temperature at Jerusalem is sixty-four degrees Fahrenheit, from which there is only a variation of twenty-three degrees in summer and fourteen and one-half in winter. The mean annual temperature of the Jordan Valley is about seventy-five degrees.

## THE CAPITALS

The kingdoms of Israel, like those of other countries, could not survive without some overtowering capital city. The first place must be accorded to Jerusalem, captured under David's generalship, and it has remained a powerful fortress down to modern times. Its location on several low hills, in plain sight of other and higher hills, and with no great acropolis for its protection, is not ideal. The original center was built on a high and precipitous rock from which the later Jerusalem was developed. Protected on three sides by deep valleys and ravines, and on the fourth side by a strong wall, the city by ancient standards of strength was a formidable fortress. Perched in the hills of western Palestine, it became the center toward which all hill-country roads converged. Either as a military power, a commercial center, or a religious attraction, Jerusalem easily occupied first place in Palestine.

The northern kingdom did not occupy a strong military position until its powerful King Omri bought a commanding hill and built upon it the strong and formidable city of Samaria. (2 Kings 16 : 24.) About three hundred to four hundred feet above a fruitful valley and plain, it became the rival of Jerusalem politically, commercially, and socially. Though captured time and again, it was a beautiful city in Roman times. Isaiah in his day called it the "crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, . . which is on the head of the fat valley of them that are overcome with wine" (Isa. 28 : 1).

### FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Describe the peculiar location of Palestine.
2. What can you tell of the plains of that land?
3. What are great features of the Jordan Valley?
4. The significance of Jerusalem in Israel's history.

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why did the Hebrews want Palestine?
2. Why study Palestine?

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON I

## THE HOMELAND OF THE HEBREWS

Palestine occupies a unique position in the history not only of the Jews but of religion. Its place as a background of all Hebrew history, from Abraham to the coming of the Messiah, over two thousand years, makes its study of first importance to every student or reader of the Old and New Testaments.

This kind of study requires a first-class geography of Bible lands, such as George Adam Smith's "Bible Atlas," or Guthe's "Bibelatlas," which contain maps of Palestine touching every important period from the dawn of history to the present day. No attempt should be made to teach much more than the physiography of the land. The political divisions of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah, respectively, and those of the great empires in Egypt and Mesopotamia should be pointed out on the map if not actually studied in their chief boundary-lines.

It must also be emphasized that political boundaries are ever shifting; that those of one age are never those of another age. Hence a study of physiography is quite different from that of historical geography.

However, the method should be modified to the extent of clinching the memory to certain places. This could be done by citing some important stirring event that "put that place on the map." For example, Ahab built a palace at Jezreel at the head of the valley of that name, and there Jezebel treacherously, though legally, caused the death of Naboth and his family to please the cupidity of her husband for Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21 : 1-16); and at the same place Jehu slew Jezebel and Jehoram at the overthrow of the house of Ahab (2 Kings 9 : 14-37).

Several of the high points of Israel's history took place at Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom. Describe one of these points (as 1 Kings 20 : 1-21). Some important results of the excavations of its ruins by Harvard University should be mentioned and emphasized.

The tragic history of Jerusalem could be best illustrated by the sweeping victory of Nebuchadnezzar, when both the city itself and the Jewish kingdom were crushed and destroyed in 586 B. C. (2 Kings 25 : 1-21.) The Phœnixlike resurrection of the city after the exile gives the greater significance to its continuance as the holy city. Its part in the life of the Master and his crucifixion will never be forgotten by men.

An interesting and very fruitful field for investigation would be its natural history. Attached to its climate or to its climates we discover a large range of plant life, flowers, shrubs, fruits, and trees. Animal life also was found in abundance and large variety. These natural products of the land made their impress on the population, and helped mold the civilization that has left such a large increment of good for our day.

The great majority of people must see a picture in its background, otherwise there is no correct standard of measurement for the objects in view. Hence the necessity of painting a background to every picture.

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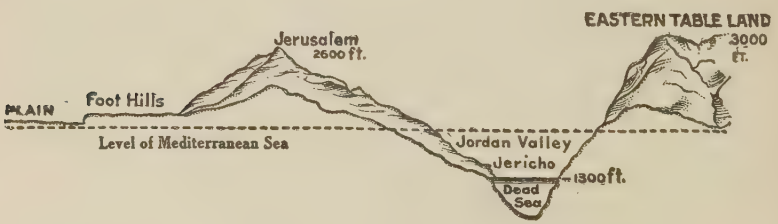

# LESSON II

# THE GREAT FOREFATHERS OF ISRAEL

## ORIGINAL PALESTINE

Palestine is an old country. It was occupied many centuries before the Israelites appeared on the horizon. Scholars have been digging into the old mounds to see what remains they could find of its early civilization. They have largely uncovered the ancient towns of Lachish on the western foothills, Gezer near the coast plain, Taanach and Megiddo on the south border of the plain of Esdraelon, and Jericho down near the Jordan River and Dead Sea. Out of these mounds of ancient ruins they have collected quantities of interesting materials which belonged to the earliest known peoples of Palestine. These articles show that they were a race of medium stature, that they made rude implements, that they cultivated the ground, and raised cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs. They had pottery of rude forms. They lived in stone houses and caves, and fortified their cities against the enemy. The most interesting of these uncovered cities are Gezer and Jericho, standing as they do on the west and east side, respectively, of the central plateau of the country.

## COMING OF THE SEMITES

These excavated ancient cities reveal another fact of first importance. They show that somewhere between 2500 and 2000 B. C. Palestine was beginning to be overrun by Canaanites, racially related to the Hebrews of later times. These Canaanites were probably the nomads or shepherds along the edge of the Arabian desert in the east, who were first attracted to the grassy plateaus, the fertile valleys, and the broad plains of the land for the abundant pasturage available there for their cattle. The remains dug out of those old cities show these peoples to have been a larger and sturdier race than the earliest inhabitants. The language they used was Semitic, closely akin to the Hebrew. Their buildings too, as shown at Gezer, were more formidable and better constructed than

those which they found in that land. Gradually too, though formerly shepherds, they began to follow in the path of their predecessors in cultivating the soil, in making metal implements and weapons, and in establishing commercial relations with their neighbors.

## BABYLONIAN TRACES IN THE WEST

The ambitious kings of early Mesopotamia made their victorious military campaigns into the "Westland," that is, the east shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Every such campaign left some traces of the customs, manners, language, and religious beliefs of the East in the soil of the West. These military campaigns opened up lines of travel, over which the commercial camel-trains, the freight-trains of the Orient, the migrations of families and tribes passed at irregular intervals through all that early period. Each such caravan took with it some of the elements of the higher civilization of Babylonia. These, added to the virile life of the Semites who had already taken possession of some of the country, formed a splendid beginning for the background of the settlement of the Hebrews in later centuries.

## PROXIMITY TO EGYPT

The great empires of the Nile Valley stretched their wings of protection over adjacent peoples and lands. Canaan was too near at hand to escape the ambitions of those mighty kings. Again, the excavations of the old cities of Palestine spread before us their undoubted evidence. The ruins of Gezer, Lachish, and Taanach have yielded many Egyptian scarabs of the twelfth dynasty (about 2000-1780 B. C.), pottery and implements of Egyptian origin, which tell us that the relations between that high civilization and the Palestinian on the Mediterranean coast were close and intimate. In this early period the rivalries between the powers on the Nile and those over in Babylonia began to assert themselves. Palestine stood between them when it was not in the power of one or the other.

## WORLD CONVULSIONS

Under the stimulating influence of Babylonia on the one hand, and of Egypt on the other, Canaan and Phœnicia, notably Tyre and Sidon, built up walled cities of great strength and racial importance. The impetus of large commercial

gains gave those communities self-confidence and growing ambitions. Then over in Mesopotamia the Kassites of the mountains poured down into the valleys and plains, and took possession of or crippled the resistance of that civilization. Egypt at the same time was suffering from an attack of rival nobles and other internal troubles that disabled her government. Since Babylonia and Egypt were out of the game, the Semitic peoples of Canaan, Phœnicia, or Syria, and the almost numberless but powerful tribes of the Arabian desert seemed to have formed an alliance for taking reprisal upon Egypt, the nearest and most attractive field for foraging.

## THE HYKSOS INVASION

Somewhere about 1780 B. C. the united armies of the Semites of Canaan, Syria, and the desert, presumably crossed the eastern frontiers of Egypt, and seized the country and its government. Egyptian historians have quietly passed over this dismal period and left us largely in the dark about its chief features. Enough is known, however, to warrant us in asserting that the grip of the Hyksos on the country lasted over two hundred years, to about 1580 B. C. These Semitic rulers on the Nile were finally driven out by the kings of Thebes. They were pursued too, during a series of years, until finally Egypt secured control of all Canaan and Syria, and sealed it by the treaty of Kadesh with the Hittites of the north.

## THE STORY OF ABRAHAM

The Genesis record of Abraham's divine call while in Ur of the Chaldees; his migration northwest to the city of Haran, a Semitic city of commercial and religious importance; and his subsequent journey down into Canaan receive a new coloring from the background painted by the discoveries of the last half-century. The old patriarch and his family followed the old established routes of travel from Mesopotamia to Canaan. He was passing through a country where the people were of his own race, the language practically the same as the one he spoke, and the customs and the religious beliefs mainly what he had known down in Babylonia. He may have left Babylonia during the reign of the great King Hammurabi, founder of the first Babylonian dynasty, about 2000 B. C. He probably landed in Canaan about the time the Semitic peoples forced their way into that country.

Abraham's tribal followers were many and powerful enough to command the respect of the local population. One of the frequent famines of that country temporarily drove him for food to the storehouses of the Nile, where he got into trouble with the authorities. His ruse, characteristic of those times, freed his band, and it returned once more in peace to Canaan. His example and leadership won the approval of the people about him, and on one military campaign he entirely routed the invaders from the east (chap. 14) and saved the captives and booty. His uprightness and devotion to duty brought from his God a promise that his posterity should be like the stars of heaven for multitude (Gen. 15 : 5), and that he should be a blessing to the race (Gen. 12 : 2, 3). Abraham's dealing with Lot, with Abimelech, and with his tribal neighbors confirm the report of the good character attributed to him who was destined to be the father of the Hebrew race.

## THE STORY OF ISAAC AND JACOB

Isaac's quiet retirement is but a link between the careers of Abraham and Jacob. His faithfulness and stedfastness toward God gave him a fixed place among the ancestors of the Hebrews. But the one forceful, aggressive, and purely Oriental figure was that of Jacob, son of Isaac, and twin brother of Esau. This scion of the house deceived his father, practically stole his brother's birthright, and fled at the advice of his scheming mother to Paddan-aram, in the region of Haran. Here by hard work and shrewd dealing he acquired a family and great flocks and herds. It is thought that his tribal group may have migrated back into Canaan along with other nomadic peoples who came in subsequent to a former shepherd invasion. At any rate, Jacob's tribal family pushed down through the country, arousing enmity here and there from local communities, and finally settled near Bethlehem, whence his sons cared for their flocks and cultivated the soil.

## PALESTINE INVADED BY HABIRI

In 1887-1888 there were found at Tel el-Amarna, in Egypt, about three hundred clay tablets carrying on their surface the wedge-shaped language of Babylonia. These tablets upon close study were found to be governmental letters and messages from kings and rulers of Syrian, Phœnician, and Canaanite cities in the fourteenth century B. C., sent to the

kings of Egypt. Several of these documents are cries of distress to the Egyptian king to send troops to protect their cities and lands from invaders who threatened them. These oncoming hordes are called Habiri, which scholars now conclude were the Semites, later identified with the Hebrews.

If these old letters give us authentic sketches of the history of the times, we have a hint of the fact that the invaders came in with opposition, settled among the population of the country, and slowly became amalgamated with them.

The stories of the patriarchs were merely episodes in the several centuries-long Semitic migrations into this wonderful little country lying on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

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**Biblical Material:** Genesis 12 to 37.

**Central Thought:** The patriarchs' fidelity to God.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. What were the chief stopping-places of Abraham during his westward trip?
2. What commended Abraham to his own house?
3. What was his attitude toward Lot and why?
4. What was commendable in Jacob?

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Early inhabitants of Canaan.
2. Characteristics of early Semitic settlers of Palestine.
3. The morals of those times and today.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON II

## THE GREAT FOREFATHERS OF ISRAEL

There is no period of Israel's history about which so little is known as the patriarchal. We have only gleams here and there that fail to light up the great realms of darkness that hang over the times. Some earnest attempt should be made to collect data on the excavations in Palestine during the last twenty years. There are plenty of technical, luxuriously illustrated, and expensive volumes on the best of these diggings, but of popular works there are few extant. Every city or college library should have the best of these. If they have not, send them titles, publishers, price, etc., and ask for their purchase for the public good.

Here, if anywhere, the teacher should have good maps or a large atlas to point out the countries involved in the discussion, and at the different periods indicated.

But the greatest care should be taken not to become involved in details. These would drown the teacher and class, and the goal of the lesson would never be reached. The many fascinating stories told about the patriarchs must be left to the faithful reading of the members of the class.

You must be satisfied to pass over many things that at first seem essential, but which are used in the narrative only to round out the characteristics of the person under consideration.

Perhaps the most difficult question will be the racial occupations of Palestine at different periods. Some patience, of course, will be exercised toward pupils who, perhaps, for the first time may have learned that there were probably several successive waves of Semitic invasion of that land; that Egypt, likewise, rolled across the frontiers of the land for several successive centuries; that the Hyksos hordes not only rolled back the Egyptian hosts, but took possession of and held Egypt for over two hundred years. There is no more soul-stirring series of national successes and defeats in all ancient history than these about which we have some facts, some imagination, and a dearth of information. Successive

lessons will bring out the development of these nations along lines that touch and influence the Israelites in their expansion and growing culture.

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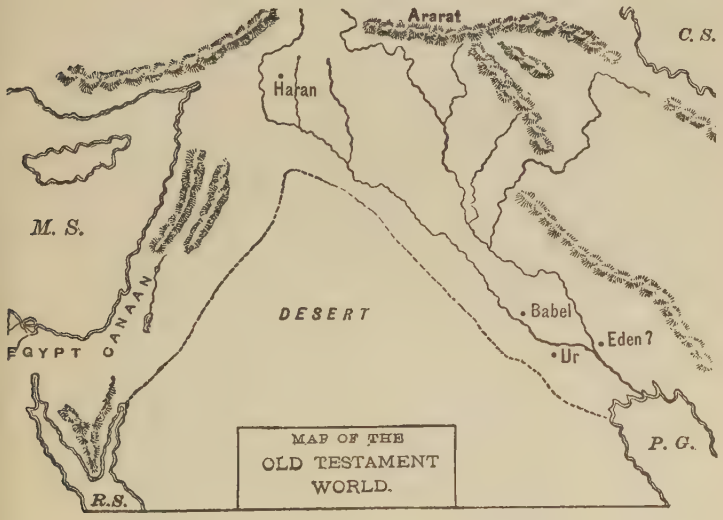

# LESSON III

# ISRAEL ENSLAVED AND DELIVERED

## WANDERING INTO EGYPT

Palestine has always suffered from occasional seasons of famine. At such times the population is forced to send for food, wherever it may be procured. At some such period Jacob and his tribe wandered into the fat land of Egypt, where far-sighted rulers had preserved their surplus grain in storehouses. Fortunately, at that time they found in authority their long-lost brother Joseph, whose influence secured for them the temporary occupation of the rich land of Goshen, on the east side of the Delta. There, in the territory of Egypt's civilization, they enjoyed peace and tribal prosperity. They probably attended their flocks and cultivated the soil in a limited way. The influence of Joseph at court gave them privileges not usually granted wandering Bedouin who pitched their tents on foreign soil.

## EGYPT'S FOREIGN POLICY

Just how long the descendants of Jacob occupied Goshen in peace we do not know. But we do have records that picture vividly the military campaigns of the succeeding Egyptian kings, and their restless ambition to "rule the world." The one great ruler who filled Egypt with his statues and who swept foreign countries with his legions was Ramses II. His stupendous plans for developing Egypt required great bodies of men to do the work. Furthermore, the Hebrews, like nomads everywhere, were multiplying with dangerous rapidity. Ramses had already established his authority over Canaan, reaching up into Syria and Phœnicia. By careful organization he increased the agricultural efficiency of Egypt, especially of the Delta. He built irrigating canals, and turned to cultivation lands that hitherto were used only for pasturage. To be prepared for famine, for war necessities, or for commercial purposes, he built two cities for warehouse purposes—Pithom (P-atum) and

Ramses. Both of these have been uncovered and are described by excavators.

## ISRAEL'S SLAVERY

The sweeping plans of such a monarch left no stone unturned to accomplish his purposes. The rapidly increasing Hebrews, and other nomads or foreigners, are supposed at this period to have been drafted into government service. They worked not only on the schemes already mentioned, but probably helped build fortresses for the defense of the prosperous country, which would be an attraction for foreign invading armies. Such enforced service at first would soon grow into ripened slavery and bondage of an oppressive kind. Not being Egyptian, they would be required to do the hardest and most menial tasks.

## TRAINING A LEADER

Israel's serfdom soon cried out for relief, but no leader was at hand. Out in the wilderness, Moses, who had fled for his life, was in charge of the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law. He wandered hither and yon with the flocks, protected them from wild beasts and wild men (Bedouin), meditated in his soul on the bitter problem of his own people's bondage, and communed with his God. As his experiences multiplied, his knowledge of the desert increased, and his meditations burned in his soul. "And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush." God ordered him back to Egypt to do a hard task, to lead Israel out of the "iron furnace" into a free air and a free life.

## TESTING PHARAOH'S RESISTANCE

Moses did not return to Egypt until after the death of the great Ramses II. The request of Moses and Aaron for the release of Israel from serfdom was met by the Pharaoh with harder tasks at the hands of cruel taskmasters. Apparently the new king was not lord of all Egypt, for the records speak of foreign invasion and home dissensions. The machinery of government was also thrown out of gear and public works would soon be out of commission. Such difficulties and confusion would add to the terrors of the plagues which came upon the nation one after the other in rapid succession. Moses recognized the hand of God in it all, opening the way for Israel

to move toward freedom, while Egypt was to learn a new lesson in providential dealings. It was an experience through which God was made known as a leader and defender of his people. "The Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I stretch forth my hand on Egypt." Of all the plagues, the death of the firstborn was the first to break the back of the king's resistance.

## THE EXODUS

Israel's rapid speed at getting together near the eastern boundary of Egypt was a large factor in the exodus. As soon as Pharaoh gave the word, the Israelites rushed out by the thousands under the leadership of Moses. Their dash for freedom was threatened with disaster when they came to the Red Sea and found that Pharaoh and his forces were in hot pursuit. The responsibility of a leader was laid heavily upon Moses when the people condemned him for inciting them to this action and thus for bringing them into such dire distress, but he believed God and God was on his side. "Jehovah caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided" (Exod. 14 : 21).

With all their "borrowings" from the Egyptians, with flocks and herds, that motley host of Israelites crossed over into the dry, uninviting desert of freedom.

## ON TO MOUNT SINAI

Once out on the desert, away from the burdens of slavery, that stupendous host with its belongings looked for a safe place. Moses probably avoided the northern and most direct route to Canaan, because of the Amalekites, and chose the southern route as leading through the territory of the Midianites, his wife's kinsfolk. He also wished to turn his nation's attention to the God who had so wonderfully delivered them from Egypt. To the sacred mountain he led them, where he established relations with God and became a mediator between God and his people. Since they now had leisure for thought, instruction, and meditation, Moses gave them messages from God on the various problems that would trouble a host of escaped slaves. The questions of food, of worship, of relations with adjacent tribes, of organization for self-defense, of finding a permanent home, gave Moses tremendous concern. Egyptian slavery had stunted Israel's growth,

had perverted their consciences, had Egyptianized their physical appetites, and soon made them dissatisfied with their new environment.

## TO KADESH-BARNEA

After the varied experiences of Mount Sinai and thereabouts, the Israelites pushed along on their journey, nearing with each lap the promised land of Canaan. Almost every mile of the long, dry, dusty march was filled with grumblings and rumblings of discontent. Hunger, thirst, disease, grouchiness, longings for the Nile almost wore to a frazzle the patience of Moses and his associates. A sigh of relief signalized their arrival at Kadesh-barnea, where a great spring forms the center of a beautiful oasis. At this choice spot, near the crossing of two international highways across the desert, the Israelites settled down to take stock of their prospects.

From this paradise Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land of Canaan. Their return after forty days of investigation startled the Hebrews. All reported, the land "surely floweth with milk and honey"; and the majority said: "Howbeit, the people that dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very great: and moreover we saw the sons of Anak there" (Num. 13 : 27, 28). Discouraged by the majority's report, the people murmured against their leaders; and then in spite of the walled cities and high fortifications, an attempt was finally made by these wandering nomads to force an entrance into Canaan. Of course they were repulsed and obliged to devise some other method of getting a foothold on the promised land.

## AROUND BY ELATH

Since Israel could not enter the land from the south, nor cross the country of the Edomites without their consent, Moses led them down to the head of the east arm of the Red Sea, to Elath, to pass eastward of Edom along the edge of the desert. This detour was through a wild and dangerous territory, where the host was exposed to raids from the desert on the east and south of the line of march. The desert was infested with serpents and wild animals, which were destructive of the people and of their flocks. But with all their handicaps, Israel pushed northward, to attempt to enter the land at some less fortified or more accessible place of attack. In

this troublesome march there were some discouraging features. Aaron and Miriam had died in the desert, and Joshua and Caleb were Moses' most trusted advisers and assistants, as he faced the task of capturing a country.

## LESSONS BY THE WAY

Israel's more or less forty years in the wilderness were worth more than gold to her. At first she was an unorganized host of runaway slaves, suddenly set free. They were wholly unprepared for the hard task before them. They had been entirely dependent on the will of others; had in a sense lost their power of initiative. Now they should be organized as an army with one purpose. They would be compelled to defend themselves and their flocks from the wandering bandits of the desert. They were forced to hunt pasture for their flocks. Their naturally religious natures were driven much to meditate on the presence and helpfulness of God. Living together, they became conscious of a tribal unity that was almost broken up by their slavery. The threats of desert Bedouin gave them a sense of solidarity for all future tasks.

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**Biblical Material:** Genesis 39 to 50; Exodus 1 to 24; Numbers 1 to 21 : 20; Deuteronomy 1 to 2 : 23.

**Central Thought:** Israel's training to be a nation.

**Lesson:** God's people delivered for a purpose.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. What first gave Joseph his influence at court?
2. Tell what you can of the cities of Pithom and Ramses.
3. Why did Moses flee to the desert?
4. What was Moses' method of organizing Israel?

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Famines in Egypt.
2. Storehouses in Egypt.
3. Slavery in Egypt.
4. Nomads of the desert.
5. Meeting and conquering severe obstacles the best training in life.

DAN
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
JERICHO
MT. NEBO
DEAD SEA
JUDAH
MOAB
LAND OF GOSHEN
Rameses
WALL OF EGYPT
KADESH BARNEA
River Nile
WILDERNESS OF PARAN
Marah
Elim
MT SEIR
WILDERNESS
Mt. Sinai
THE RED SEA

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON III

## ISRAEL ENSLAVED AND DELIVERED

This lesson carries us into one of the greatest civilizations of ancient times. The narrow ribbon of the Nile Valley was the home of the great empires of the ancient, middle, and later Egypt, with all its temples, palaces, pyramids, and tombs. Into this marvelous civilization the Hebrews came. Their sojourn seems to have been welcomed at first. But the vaulting ambition of the kings of the nineteenth dynasty grasped every element of value and made it contribute to their glory. Secure as full a knowledge of that superior dynasty as time and opportunity will allow for your own sake, and the vividness of the picture of slavery which you may be able to put before the class.

Have at hand a good large map of Egypt and the Sinaitic Peninsula, especially of the delta with the Suez Canal, the ancient lakes and excavated sites of Pithom (P-atum) and Raamses (Ramses). On this you can then locate and visualize the movements of Israel in Egypt, out of Egypt to Sinai, to Kadesh-barnea, to Elath, and up through the desert east of Mount Seir to the river Arnon. Do not expect to find, in fact, spend no time on the many important stations at which the Israelites stopped on the journey.

The minute details of the wilderness journey must be despatched with a kind of rush for the goal. The many questions concerning Moses' marriage, Miriam's jealousy, Aaron's choice as priest, Dathan and Abiram's sacrilege. Get as true a picture of the desert and the Bedouin as you can, so that you yourself may appreciate what Israel was up against in its fearful experiences.

Read if possible all the Bible passages cited as Scripture for reading. The omissions are not essentials in an hour's study of the high points of this period.

Let your reading of Egyptian history and of the peculiarities of the desert of Sinai fill in the gaps of knowledge in your pupils. Their reading is not expected to reach much farther than the lids of their Bibles.

The last dread journey of Israel around Mount Seir is full of desert scenes, which you can readily fill in by some careful reading.

Israel's almost insurmountable obstacles to success were a training-school for all her subsequent career. If they suffered they brought it upon themselves; if they won out it was due to their faithfulness to their God.

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# LESSON IV

# CAPTURING A COUNTRY

## THE LURE OF A HOMELAND

Moses was leading his escaped slaves to the promised land. One futile attempt (Num. 14) had been made to force an entrance into Canaan from the south, from Kadesh-barnea. Defeated at that place, the leader and his advisers were compelled to make a detour of the country of the Edomites, in order to find a possible entrance at some point on the eastern boundaries. In spite of all their circuitous wanderings and disastrous diseases in the desert, they never lost the ambition of finding in some region a land which they could call their own. The suspicions and open opposition of the nomad people, against whom they brushed in their desert wanderings, did not on the whole wipe out their budding national spirit.

## OVER THE ARNON

To avoid a clash with tribes in his proposed line of march, Moses asked permission of Sihon, King of the Amorites, to pass quietly and peacefully through his country. (Num. 21 : 21, 22.) Sihon's knowledge of the value of the promise of the wandering nomads probably led him to refuse the request, and in addition he summoned his troops and attacked the Israelites in a pitched battle at Jahaz. Long years of trying hardships in the desert had made sturdy fighters of Israel, and they were completely victorious over the Amorites. Israel captured all the Amorite territory from the river Arnon northward to the brook Jabbok, territory which Sihon had formerly wrested from the Moabites. The eastern boundary of this first conquest of Israel was the fortified border of the Ammonites, on the edge of the Arabian desert. The city of Heshbon was the capital and center of this new acquisition. The Israelites now distributed themselves in the towns and cities which fell to their possession. The wonderful highlands furnished abundant pasture and water for

their flocks and herds, and the fields gave them their first opportunity to practise agriculture in peace.

## ON TO BASHAN

The newly awakened thirst for conquest kept Israel restive. After a reasonable consolidation of the territory already taken, Moses sent spies farther north. As a result of their findings, he led a military campaign across the Jabbok into Bashan. The giant Og went out from Edrei, his capital, to meet the invaders. Like Sihon and his hosts, Og was beaten, and his army destroyed. The Israelites were now in nominal possession of the immediate East-Jordan territory, stretching from the Arnon in the south as far as the Jarmuk and beyond. The cities were already built, the vineyards planted, and the fields under limited cultivation. Their flocks were doubtless the most prosperous of all their possessions. Across this territory there were international roads that were often lined with camel-trains of traders between the East and the West, whose information was always welcome to the leaders of Israel.

## FACING THE WEST-JORDAN LAND

Israel had now secured more than a foothold of territory. She was the owner through conquest of several thousand square miles of highland, plain, and valley. There were high points from which they could see across the Jordan on the far western horizon, the quiet regular ranges of hills of the central plateau. That was the territory held by the Canaanites, whose formidable walled cities so terrified ten of the twelve spies sent out from Kadesh-barnea. Deuteronomy (1 to 3) tells us what the majestic old leader, Moses, said to his often rebellious, but nevertheless dear people in the face of the future.

Moses too was permitted to view from Pisgah the land of promise—the real goal to which he had been leading Israel, but was not allowed to set foot on its soil. (Num. 20 : 12.)

## CROSSING THE JORDAN

Some years after the capture of the East-Jordan territory, we know not how long, the Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, organized for a military campaign on the west side

of the river. That was the Promised Land of their fathers and of their own hopes and ambitions. Spies were sent, after the usual military custom, to gain information and make a report which would help Joshua and his leaders to determine their plan of campaign.

But they needed more than human wisdom and strength. Joshua believed God. Like Marshal Foch of France during the World War, he was glad to express his faith and to have it known that every day he acknowledged his need and called upon God for power which he knew could win. He taught the people to depend upon God. While they were to do their utmost they were to expect victory from him. God has charge of the forces of nature. "Joshua said . . . tomorrow Jehovah will do wonders among you." "The waters of the Jordan shall be cut off . . . they shall stand in one heap."

## STORMING JERICHO

The one strategic city in this part of the valley was Jericho, somewhat above the floor of the valley and six miles west of the river, just under the brows of the western hills. The ruins of this old city are oval-shaped, walled, and about 1,100 feet long by 500 feet wide, and cover about twelve acres. The top of the modern mound is about forty feet above the virgin soil. Just outside the old walls is the famous spring of Elisha. This old city was able to command both the lower fords of the Jordan and several roads that led up into the western hills. The excavation of this noble ruin by scholars confirms the biblical account of ancient Jericho. Its walls are in better shape and its entire form better preserved than that of any old Palestinian city yet examined.

The attack on Jericho was carefully planned in every detail, but with firm faith in God. After crossing the Jordan, Joshua gathered the people together at Gilgal, and led them in the feast of the Passover, and in a renewed dedication to Jehovah. Then they calmly encompassed the city for seven days and victory was won. "Jehovah said . . . the wall of the city shall fall down flat," "and the wall fell down flat." Jericho became Israel's headquarters.

## PUSHING UP INTO THE COUNTRY

Having secured this foothold the Israelites prepared to drive up some of the valleys to the level of the plateau. By

stratagem the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh captured the cities of Ai and Bethel, well toward the summit of the range, though these were only small villages with a poor population. Once on top of the ridge these tribes took other small cities and villages, but did not yet venture down into the western plains occupied by strong Canaanite cities, such as Gezer and Aijalon.

An inference in Judges (chap. 1) leads us to think that Judah and Simeon won their territory by going southward from Jericho. They passed by the Jebusite fortress of Jerusalem, and swept through to Hebron and the south country. Their conquests were not continuous, for here too the Canaanites were well fortified against such an invasion.

## DRIVING TO THE NORTH AND WEST

From the base already captured Joshua and his legions drove a wedge northward between the Canaanites located on either side of the plateau. At Shiloh they set up their headquarters for worship, and made this a religious center. On beyond this point they pushed their conquests, until they came to the rim of the plain of Esdraelon. A formidable row of Canaanite cities not only blocked their advance, but defied them. Some of the places were Megiddo, at the great pass in the Carmel range, Taanach, and Beth-shean. Down the western slopes Israel also pushed, and overthrew several city kings and their villages, almost down to the western plain on the seacoast.

## WHOLESALE SLAUGHTER

The terrific slaughter which was dealt out to the cities (villages) captured in these campaigns shocks our modern sense of right and humanity. Apparently without mercy or discrimination, men, women, children, and animals were put to the sword. Attempts to justify this carnage have been made by theologians for centuries, and on the grounds that Israel's future would be safer if they should wipe out the idolatrous and corrupt Canaanites. However that may be, the armies of Israel were pursuing the same tactics and employing the same methods as other nations, of securing a safe and permanent country for their posterity. The Gibeonites, by a piece of sharp Oriental deception and strategy, saved their lives and city, but lost their freedom. (Josh. 9 : 3-27.) Other

small towns and villages were wiped out by Israel's soldiers, and their places occupied by the new and vigorous invaders, until practically all the hill-country except Jerusalem had fallen into their hands.

## OTHER TRIBAL CONQUESTS

The first chapter of Judges recites a long list of Canaanite cities unhurt by the Israelite raids upon the land. Each tribe seems to have had assigned to it, or to have captured for itself, a certain territory, always near some Canaanite city, cities, or fortress. At least there seemed to have been an understanding that each separate tribe was responsible for the conquest or subjection to slavery of the Canaanites within or adjacent to its boundaries. Joshua's generalship did not give the Israelites full possession of Canaan, but it did put into their power a few strategically located high points of vantage, a superior morale, and a faith in a God who would honor right living and right doing.

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**Biblical Material:** Numbers 21 : 21 to 36 : 13; Deuteronomy 2 : 24-34; Joshua 1 to 24; Judges 1 to 2 : 10.

**Central Thought:** Israel had to acquire her homeland.

**Lesson:** Valuable conquests are made only in the face of fierce enemies.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why did Israel make so long a detour to enter Canaan?
2. What was Israel's justification for attacking Sihon and Og?
3. What part did religion play in the wars of conquest?
4. Tell what you can of the Canaanites.

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why did not Moses enter the land?
2. The strategic location of Jericho.
3. The wickedness of the Canaanites.
4. Shiloh as a religious center.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON IV

## CAPTURING A COUNTRY

Read Joshua and Judges carefully. Consult at least one commentary on the meaning of the different passages. Study for your own good the various theories regarding Israel's conquest of the land. Take the history of any country, for example England, and show how it was anciently conquered in a way not entirely dissimilar from that of Israel's conquest of Palestine.

This lesson of all others must be taught with a good map of all Palestine in the time of the conquest or judges. The topography of the East-Jordan territory, especially of Bashan with its former underground cities, its volcanic remains, its open plains and pasturelands, should be made very clear to the pupil. After the preliminary drives and the consolidation of the gains made, the Israelites apparently settled down to a quiet life on the east side of the Jordan. Emphasize their proximity to the adjacent peoples and its influence on the morals of the people. Pass by the long episode of Balaam and Balak, for it bristles with troublesome controversial questions that you should not take the time in this lesson to discuss.

The whole question of the conquest of the West-Jordan territory should not be opened up. The possible earlier settlement of some of the tribes may be referred to, but the chief idea of this lesson is the conquest led by Moses and Joshua.

You should bring out emphatically the character of the defenses of the Canaanites as reported by the majority of the spies (Num. 13 : 28, 29, 32, 33), and also the notable tribes who are said to have occupied parts of the land.

Show how the smaller isolated city governments of the land became an easy prey to the invaders. The lack of cooperation and coalition among the various villages, towns, and unwalled cities left them at the mercy of a few well-armed and well-trained men. It should be especially noted that practically all the seacoast plain and the plain of Esdraelon remained unconquered and secure in the hands of

strong Canaanite cities. Their defensive troops were equipped with chariots of iron (Judg. 1 : 19), and no Israelite army of that date could successfully cope with them.

Some of the tribes by watchful waiting and strategy gradually extended their boundaries, and weakened and then enslaved the Canaanite towns one after the other until they secured a firm footing in the land.

Judges (chap. 18 and 19) gives a vivid illustration of how the tribe of Dan migrated to the upper Jordan Valley and then seized Laish (later Dan) from its possessors, and made it a great commercial center on one of the principal highways that crossed from Damascus to the Mediterranean Sea.

**Every-day Lesson:** One steady purpose to reach a certain goal, and infinitesimal inching along toward it, almost invariably reaches it. Israel's faith in a superior God, her obedience to divine commands, and steady and persistent action, won for them a new home—a national desire.

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# LESSON V

# ISRAEL'S JUNGLE LIFE

## THE LAST LESSON

We left the Israelites in the last lesson in possession of some of the hill-country west of the Jordan. They were perched on high points, out of reach of the Canaanites, who occupied the rich valleys and plains of the country. The people in the low country were well able to defend themselves against the nomadic Hebrews of the hills. Their chariots of iron were more than a match for any equipment which the Hebrews could muster against them. This fact is all the more striking, since the Israelites were not a coalition of tribes, but independent groups here and there on the plateau, both of the land west as well as east of the Jordan.

## COMMON INTERESTS

The Israelites were not satisfied with settling down quietly by the side of the Canaanites. They were constantly watching for some place to attack their neighbors. Their aim was to gain complete control of the land and its possessors the Canaanites. The language of the two peoples was practically one and the same, their manners and customs of common origin, and their personal characteristics largely the same. Doubtless too their trading instincts were cultivated in the same way to achieve the same end. All these common interests tended to minimize their differences and to bridge the gulf between them. They even intermarried with their former enemies and gradually became one with them.

## A DIFFERENT RELIGION

The Israelites had brought with them a kind of faith in Jehovah, who had led them out of Egypt, and as far as possible through the desert, and gave them as they believed a foothold in the land of promise. The Canaanites, who had already occupied this land, had established some of their

places of worship "on the hilltops and under every green tree." Their worship was famous for its corruption of morals and its degrading influence.

## NO CENTRAL AUTHORITY

The independent Israelitish tribes, each managing its own affairs, and the growing familiarity with their neighbors, the Canaanites, made the whole country a kind of jungle. Any raider who came along had only local cities or groups to fight. Any well-organized army, even of small size, could easily secure a foothold among these isolated tribes and cities. Israel's affiliation with her neighbors soon told on her morale. She began to let down in her loyalty to Jehovah and to the high ideals taught by Moses and Joshua and to revere and serve the idols set up in the beautiful sacred groves of the Canaanites.

## FOREIGN INVADERS

The first outside aggressor who seized the country was that foreigner with a long name, Cushan-risha-thaim, from far-off Mesopotamia. Eight years he oppressed Israel, until Othniel organized an army that crushed the invader and rescued his people. As a reward for this service Othniel was made chief or judge over Israel. After about forty years of peace, the King of Moab, at the head of an alliance of Moab and Ammon and Amalek, took his vengeance on Israel. He crossed the Jordan, seized Jericho, and forced the Israelites to pay tribute for eighteen years. Israel again came to herself, cried out to God, and God raised up that left-handed Benjamite, Ehud, who secretly stabbed the King of Moab, and at the head of the Israelites cut off and destroyed the Moabite army at the fords of the Jordan. (Judg. 3 : 15-30.) The Philistines too, settled on the southwest coast of Palestine, were forced to let go their hold on the Israelites by Shamgar's daring assault. (Judg. 3 : 31.)

## CANAANITE REPRISALS

Tired of the continuous advances of the Israelites in the north country, the Canaanites of Galilee, with Jabin, king of the city of Hazor, as their leader, seized and "mightily oppressed the children of Israel" twenty years. (Judg. 4 : 3.)

These Canaanites had nine hundred chariots of iron as one contingent of their army. Their commander-in-chief was Sisera, a far-famed general in those days. The appeal of Deborah, a prophetess, aroused Barak of Naphtali, who raised ten thousand men of Zebulun and Naphtali, mustered them at Mount Tabor, attacked the Canaanite hosts with all their chariots, and with an accompanying storm fought them and completely routed them. Even Sisera, and later Jabin the king, were destroyed by the intrepid Israelites. (Judg. 4 : 4-24.) That tremendous victory is celebrated in the exquisite old poem, the song of Deborah (Judg. 5), the oldest long poem in the Old Testament.

## GIDEON'S BAND

Israel's years of peace and quiet again led them to forget God, to neglect any unified action. They soon became the foraging ground for the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the "children of the East" (Judg. 6 : 3). Israel was so helpless in face of these raiders that they hid in caves, and in dens in the mountains, and in fortresses, to save themselves from being carried away captives. The raiders left neither stock nor grain nor fruit in the land. They stripped it bare. After a bitter cry of the people and a sharp rebuke by a prophet (6 : 8-10), a leader was found in the person of Gideon. This young man hesitatingly took up the task. But God's assurance and the willingness of the people put courage into his heart. He began by breaking down his father's altar to Baal and building an altar to Jehovah. Then thirty-two thousand enlisted men out of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali came at the blast of the trumpet to follow him. Everyone fearful and trembling, however, was sent home—twenty-two thousand of them. Another test was made at the spring Harod. Every man who bowed down and drank as a horse or cow was sent away, while those who lapped water with their tongues like a dog were retained—only three hundred of them. "The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the East lay along the valley (Jezreel), like locusts for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand which is upon the seashore for multitude" (Judg. 7 : 12). Gideon planned an attack at midnight, with pitchers, torches, and trumpets, deployed in three companies on three sides. At the blast of his trumpet all three hundred blew, and shouted, "the sword of Jehovah and of Gideon," and broke their

pitchers, held their torches in their left hands and their trumpets in their right hands. "And all the host ran," and they fought each other and fled pell-mell toward and across the Jordan. Then came back those dismissed fearful ones and hosts of others to pursue the fleeing raiders. The victory was complete, Israel rescued, her land saved.

## MINOR EVENTS AND JEPHTHAH

Gideon's son, Abimelech, thought he should be king, and so in true Oriental fashion he hired "vain and light fellows" (Judg. 9 : 4) to kill seventy of his brothers who were likely to dispute his claim to the throne. After much fighting and intriguing, Abimelech met his fate when a woman dropped from a tower a piece of a mill-stone on his head. (9 : 52, 53.) Several minor leaders rescued the Israelites in the next few years from oppression by a few of the surrounding peoples. The most notable leader east of the Jordan, who may have been active during some of the preceding eras, was Jephthah, the Gileadite. The Ammonites, on the edge of the desert, had pushed their advantage into Israel's territory and made them their subjects. Jephthah, with all the daring of a border bandit, attacked, completely routed and drove back the Ammonites, and captured from them twenty cities. Following this victory we have the fatal effects of the jealousy of the tribe of Ephraim on the west of the Jordan. (12 : 1-6.)

## THE PHILISTINES

One of the troublesome peoples who annoyed Israel was the Philistines, who occupied the seacoast on the southwest. They had landed as pirates from the shores of Asia Minor, or the Ægean Sea. They built up five city centers, each ruled by an independent king. These kings, however, formed a defensive and offensive alliance. They lived on the highway between Egypt on the southwest and Mesopotamia on the northeast, and were compelled to be ready for any international emergency that touched their territory. Their cities were heavily walled and their armies well trained and equipped. Their preparedness and their aggressiveness made them a continual menace to the Israelites, who occupied the hills overlooking their plains. More than this, the Philis-

tines in this period easily captured the heights and fortresses of Israel and ruled them for "forty years" (Judg. 13 : 1).

## SAMSON'S EXPLOITS

Samson was one of the most weird and fascinating men of the Bible. Born and brought up a Nazirite (Judg. 13 : 7), with God-fearing parents, he had the early advantages of good training and counsel. His appearance at this critical period of Israel's oppression by the Philistines gives a new turn to events. Samson, a giant in strength, makes individual attacks on the Philistines, and in every encounter routs them. His mistake began when he trusted himself to a woman whose motives were deceitful and treacherous. She schemed to rid her people of this pestiferous fellow. She partly succeeded and he was humiliated and imprisoned. But his sportsmanship appealed to the Philistines, and regarding him as harmless they sent for him to play the clown at one of their great feasts. Samson did his part well, and conscious of his superior strength he forced or broke off two pillars of the supports of the building, and the structure crashed to the ground killing himself and more Philistines than he had slain in all his life—a strange character in a stranger period of Israel's jungle career.

## PHILISTINES IN CONTROL

The death of Samson, only a few miles from his early home, did not permanently check the inroads of the Philistines against Israel. They kept pushing up into the hill-country, until they met Israel in a battle beside Ebenezer. (1 Sam. 4 : 1.) "Israel was smitten before the Philistine" (4 : 2) near Aphek and driven farther back into the hills. To test the strength of Israel's God, the elders of Israel took the ark of the covenant from Shiloh to be carried before the army into battle. With it there went two priests, sons of Eli the judge. (4 : 4.) The army of Israel went into battle with a great shout. Though the Philistines feared greatly, they were given orders like these, "Quit yourselves like men and fight" (4 : 9). Israel quailed before the onset of the Philistine drive, the ark of the covenant was taken, the priests were slain, and Israel was completely routed, leaving the Philistines in control of the field.

**Biblical Material:** Judges and 1 Samuel 1 to 4.

**Central Thought:** Israel's experimental period, idols or God?

**Lesson:** Fidelity to Jehovah gave peace; forgetting Jehovah brought disaster.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. In what respects were the Israelites like the Canaanites?
2. What was the essential difference between them?
3. What made Israel an easy prey to raiders?
4. When did Israel cry to Jehovah?

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The Philistines and their origin.
2. The uprising of the Canaanites under Jabin, King of Hazor.
3. Gideon's home-training.
4. The office of judge in the Judges period.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON V

## ISRAEL'S JUNGLE LIFE

Read the book of Judges and write down the different foreign invasions, their oppressions, and Israel's release therefrom. Do not try to solve the knotty chronological problem, but note the probable fact that more than one of the oppressions were in progress at one time. Present as fully as you can the confusion of authority among the population, the commingling of religion, and the consequent weakness against all outside aggression.

The times of the judges were full of confusions and heartaches and disasters. Peoples clashed with peoples and tribes with tribes, until the land was almost a welter of blood. The teacher should gather as complete a line of facts as possible about the many small peoples who play a role on that tragical stage. Especially important is it that you understand the life and influence of the Canaanites, whose stronghold on the country gave them such power over the nomadic Israelites. Canaanitic worship, with all its attendant evils, caught the Israelites in its net, and put them out of commission for several longer or shorter periods in the era of the judges.

The isolated and independent groups of Israelites on the plateau of the country were not bound together by any political or military tie. This fact left them at the mercy of any strong predatory band of foreigners. Time after time someone of the raiding peoples on every side of Israel overran this territory, plundered their crops, drove off their flocks and herds, and compelled the Israelites either to yield submission or to hide in caves and dens of the rocks. Emphasize this terrific condition of things.

Guard against using up all your time on the fascinating story of Gideon and his three hundred. In fact, there are so many engaging stories within the range of the book of Judges that any teacher must carefully plan his work before he ventures on the lesson. The several minor judges in the last half of chapter twelve can be laid aside with a word. The stories of Samson are characteristically Oriental. They tell

the plain truth as an Oriental today would tell it, with all its crudeness and coarseness. We are not to apologize for the actions of the rough border adventurer, but simply to recognize in him the conventional life of the men of that day, whose virtues were not wiped out by their blemishes. The last three chapters of the book give another picture of the evils of the period, which would best be passed over except with a word. Also, do not waste time on the troublesome chronological problems of the book of Judges, as several of these oppressions may have occurred simultaneously.

The combined picture of the times of the judges is rather blurred. It is stained with idolatry and streaked with defection, defeat, and disaster. Its impression on the mind is depressing and discouraging—a warning vociferous and far-reaching against all the evils that cursed that day.

**Every-day Lesson:** The traps and pitfalls that lie all about the resolute though weak man. If self were mastered then the influence of that mastery radiates on and on unceasingly.

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# LESSON VI

# SAMUEL, THE KING-MAKER

## SAMUEL, THE KING-MAKER

Some of the Israelites were paying tribute to the victorious Philistines, who were constantly crowding up into the strongholds of Israel. Shiloh was the central place of Jehovah worship until these aliens captured the ark and slew the priests, the sons of old Eli, the judge, in the fatal battle of Aphek. It is thought, by the statement of Jeremiah (chap. 7), that one result of this victory was the destruction of Shiloh and its temple, whose ruins today are a sorry spectacle to every visitor. Not a house or a wall remains of that once prosperous and happy town.

## SAMUEL'S START

Late in the judgeship of Eli at Shiloh a peasant from the hill-country of Ephraim came to Shiloh to an annual sacred feast. Hannah, his wife, brought along her small boy and presented him for dedication at the temple. He was consecrated and then "loaned" to the temple. He was kept within its precincts and carefully trained by those in charge. His association with Eli and the serious-minded persons about the temple gave the mind and heart of the young boy the desire to live in such surroundings and to enjoy them. The presence of sacred things and the taking part in worship by Samuel made a deep impression on his young life. The sanctity of Eli's own life touched the mainsprings of Samuel's ambition.

## SAMUEL'S VICTORY

The Philistines kept up their raids into the hills of Palestine. Their successes encouraged them to attack the weakening Israelites wherever they could deliver a stunning blow. The Israelites in desperation made such counter-attacks as they could; sometimes they were successful, and sometimes they were driven back. On one of these doubtful occasions Samuel, now grown to manhood, said, "Gather all Israel to

Mizpah and I will pray for you unto Jehovah" (1 Sam. 7: 5). The people of Israel assembled at Mizpah and repented, as they had often done in the times of the earlier judges. As soon as the Philistine lords heard of that assembly they rallied their forces and made for Mizpah to scatter the rebel Israelites. Samuel's intercession to Jehovah, and his offering just as the Philistines were about to deliver their blow, brought a great thunder-storm upon the attackers and a glorious victory for Israel. The Philistines were defeated and driven as far back as Beth-car. (1 Sam. 7 : 11.)

## SAMUEL'S JUDGESHIP

Samuel came as a kind of climax to a long line of judges, some of them of mediocre character, some of them like Deborah, Gideon, and Eli, strong enough to hold Israel to Jehovah during the years of their office. Samuel's ancestry, his training in the temple at Shiloh, and his stedfast character, gave him large influence among his people. As judge he had the reputation of deciding cases fairly, of treating the poor on an equality with the rich, and of never accepting a bribe from any man. He made a circuit each year from Bethel to Gilgal and Mizpah, occupying "the bench" in those towns on such cases as should come before him as the supreme court of the land. At Ramah he lived and had his altar there, and he was always ready to serve those that applied to him. Samuel's official duties were so burdensome that he neglected to train his own sons, or to bring them up in full obedience to the right.

## ISRAEL DEMANDS A KING

When Samuel became old he appointed his sons to be judges over Israel. But they thought they were wiser than "the old man," and they "could hew out a career" for themselves. They began by throwing overboard his methods and by adopting their own, which included the taking of bribes and the perverting of justice. (1 Sam. 8 : 3.) The people, who were the real sufferers, refused any longer to stand for any such perversion of right, or such high-handed banditry in the highest offices of the land. The elders of Israel came together, considered the abuse, and went over the heads of the all-wise sons of Samuel and appealed to the old judge himself. They had observed that the nations about them were ruled and judged by kings, and they requested of Samuel,

"Make us a king, to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8 : 5). Samuel, of course, was disappointed, as any too indulgent father might have been, that his own sons had not "made good" in the office to which they had been appointed.

## SAMUEL'S SKETCH OF A KING

Although Samuel was displeased at the demand of the people, he was big enough to recognize the justice of their case. At Jehovah's command the old judge accepted the inevitable, and told the people the manner of the king who should rule over them. (1 Sam. 8 : 9-18.) Such a king should be chosen by the people, and they themselves should carry the responsibility for his election. His demands of them, such as requirements of service, of taxes, and of army, were to be exacting and burdensome. Even these requirements did not discourage the elders of Israel; at any rate, they were preferable to the "superior wisdom" of the sons of Samuel.

## SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL

Saul had been sent by his father Kish to find his asses which had strayed away from home among the hills of Benjamin or Ephraim. On the way he and his servant stopped at a town to make inquiry of the seer about the whereabouts of the asses. It happened to be the day of the sacrifice at which Samuel was the guest. The two men met, and Samuel set Saul in the "chiefest seat" at the feast and gave him the choicest portion of the viands. The next morning early Samuel called Saul and together they went down "to the end of the city." While alone, "Samuel took the vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not that Jehovah hath anointed thee to be prince over his inheritance?" (1 Sam. 10 : 1.) Another account tells us that after Saul had shown his mettle in routing the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11), Samuel called together the people at Gilgal, and there Samuel and the people together publicly and formally made Saul king over Israel. (1 Sam. 11 : 14, 15.)

## SAUL'S FAILURE

Saul faced a fierce war with the Philistines. Israel had been crippled for lack of equipment, while these lords of the seacoast had seized and held many of the strongholds of the land. But the strategy of Jonathan and the intrepid drive of

Israel's hosts under Saul swept the Philistines down over the hillsides toward their own fortified cities. Saul was next sent by Samuel utterly to wipe out the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15 : 3), who occupied territory down on the road toward Egypt. With two hundred thousand men Saul is said to have attacked the hated Amalekites and to have utterly destroyed man, woman, and child, but to have saved King "Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs and all that was good" (1 Sam. 15 : 9). When Saul returned victoriously from the campaign, Samuel met him with a sharp rebuke for having failed to carry out the command of Jehovah. When Saul side-stepped, Samuel met him with, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15 : 22). Although there seemed to be penitence, the failure to obey could not be countenanced in any man who held the office of king over Israel. Samuel himself became the official executioner of Agag the Amalekite king, whom Saul brought back as a trophy of victory.

## SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID

Samuel went to his home in Ramah in great sorrow because Saul had not "made good." Under a divine impulse Samuel is sent with a horn of oil to Bethlehem to select a king from among the sons of Jesse. The old judge and prophet was cordially welcomed, and Jesse brought out his sons one by one for inspection. Samuel looked them all over, found no one to answer his requirements, and would not sit down until the youngest, David the shepherd boy, had been brought in from the field and flocks. Upon an inward order, Samuel took his horn of oil and anointed this ruddy youth, David, in the midst of his surprised brothers, to be future king over Israel. A spirit and an inspiration took possession of David from that day forward.

## SAUL'S INSANITY

Saul's rejection from the throne of Israel went to his head. He lost his mental balance and was quite unable to control himself or manage the state. Another account in Samuel tells us that David was called in to calm down by sweet music the troubled spirit of Saul. The trial was a success as long as the music played, but in its absence the old spirit returned. Jealousy of David's popularity added to the flame and led

Saul to plan and plot for David's death. Driven like a partridge into the mountains David fled before the unquenchable anger of the disappointed and jealous king. Humbly conscious of his own power and future David resisted every temptation to kill Saul, even though in doing it he had to wander about without refuge or home.

### SAUL'S DEATH

The lack of capacity in Saul as king and leader of the army finally led to a desperate battle for existence with the Philistines on the plain of Esdraelon. Saul's troops were completely beaten and he and his sons fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

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**Biblical Material:** 1 Samuel.

**Central Thought:** Samuel's model life.

**Lesson:** Samuel's ideal personal relations with his people.

### FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. What did Samuel's early life have to do with his subsequent career?
2. In what respect did Samuel fail in his office?
3. What objections did he have to a king?
4. What was the kernel of Saul's rejection from the kingship?

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Samuel's offices of judge, prophet, and priest.
2. The secret of Samuel's success..
3. David's quiet reverence for the anointed of Jehovah.
4. The comradeship of David and Jonathan.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON VI

## SAMUEL, THE KING-MAKER

Read First Samuel with pencil and note-book and more than once if possible. In addition test its hard places by reference to one of the best commentaries. Make a study of Saul's career as the first ruler of the commonwealth of Israel. His public choice was made by the people, and without court or cabinet he carried on his government. The beginnings of David's career, his training and his self-management, deserve study.

From this time on to the end of the course we shall be obliged to take up great blocks of history for each lesson. The limits of time will compel us to touch only the most vital issues or the best illustrated themes.

Today's lesson covers the book of First Samuel. It has a host of details that cannot be considered either in the treatment or in class discussion. They must be simply passed over. Wide-awake pupils will read the whole book and thus get a background for the parts of it that will be discussed in the printed lesson and the class.

Samuel's life should be carefully followed step by step, as he is the pivotal character of First Samuel. His severity of judgment, his stern execution of duty, his unswerving sense of right and justice, and his supreme faith in Jehovah are traits that will stand the acid test. Samuel stands out as one of the first characters of the Old Testament, even though his laxity toward his sons brought him the disappointment of his life—the anointing of a king to rule over Israel. Samuel's soul was tried by that fine-looking, impressive, head-and-shoulders-above-others, son of Benjamin, the great, weak Saul. Perhaps Saul's character could best be measured by his attitude toward the orders given him regarding the treatment of the Amalekites. There he displayed a disregard of Samuel's commands that would rule him out of any game that required obedience to his God for all the future. The moral effect of such disobedience turned in on his peace of mind and his efficiency in carrying out the complex problems

of the government of Israel. Disturbed in heart and soul, Saul could not prevent jealousy and envy from finding places of rest in his nature. David's growing popularity and Saul's growing inefficiency and open jealousy make a sad picture of the last days of the first king of the newly established kingdom of Israel.

Familiarize yourself with all the places and persons that fell in the way of David's outlaw career in the wilderness of Judah and on the territory of the Philistines. Note especially the calm and self-control with which David met the forces that planned against his success. In all his brush and swish with the detectives and advance agents of Saul in the wilderness, David was well-poised and far-seeing. Saul's downward course reached the bottom at Mount Gilboa, where he and his sons paid the penalty for their independent and inefficient method of trying to defend the land and people of Israel.

**Every-day Lesson:** Only a man with Samuel's character and single devotion to duty could occupy his position as priest, prophet, judge, and anointer of kings. High character is essential to large and commanding influence.

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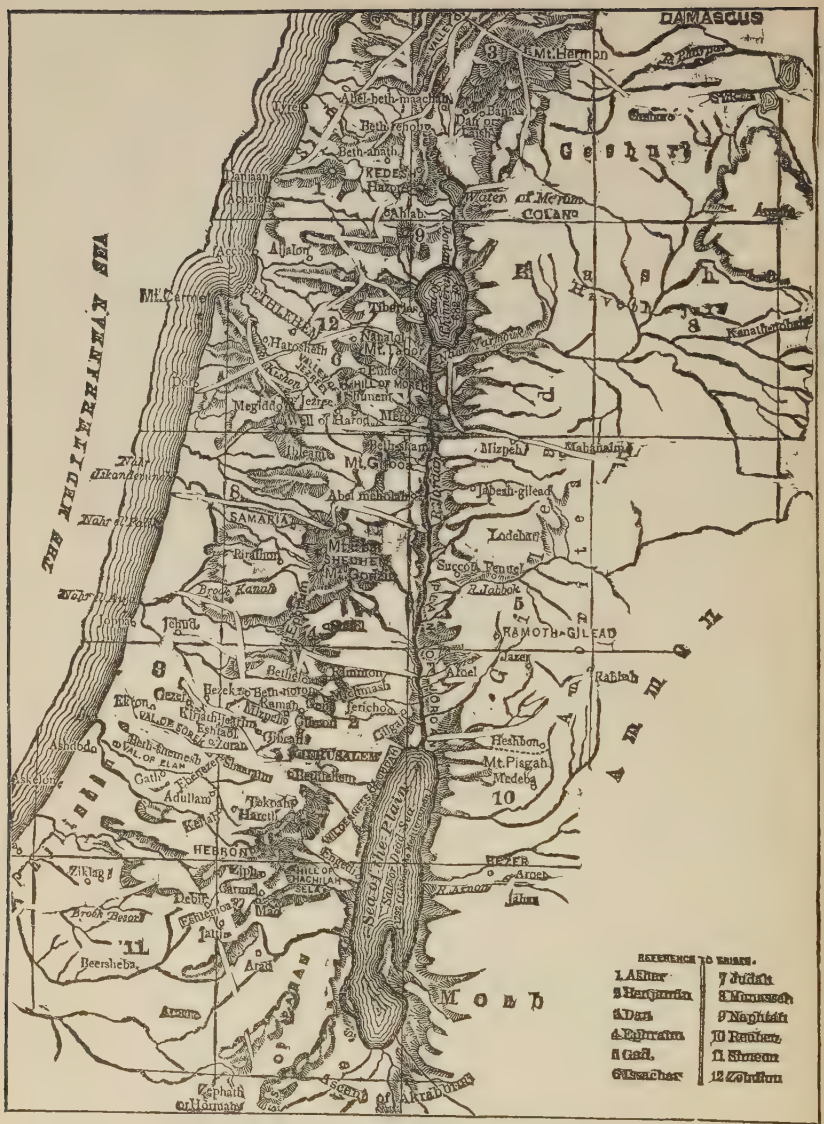


**Palestine in the Time of David and Solomon**

# LESSON VII

# DAVID EXPANDED THE NATION

## SAUL'S BEQUEST

Saul's tragic death on Mount Gilboa at the hands of the Philistines left the new kingdom of Israel practically wiped off the map. That hardy race of aliens seems to have completely secured control of all the western division of Palestine. The remnant of Saul's shattered kingdom on the east of the Jordan chose as its capital the city of Mahanaim in Gilead. It was probably located on the uplands, safely to the north of the Brook Jabbok. The one surviving son of Saul, Ish-bosheth, here declared his independence soon after the fatal battle of Mount Gilboa. The southern tribes were left to themselves far from the protecting arm of this self-proclaimed king.

## DAVID'S CORONATION

David's virile life and his general character were well known to the southern tribes. His successful raids, his valor, and his generosity won their favor. When Saul's power over them had been broken they turned to David and made him their king in Hebron, twenty-three miles south of Jerusalem, far from the reach of the son of Saul. Hebron was then the chief city of the south country and of the tribe of Judah. It was on a highway between the Palestinian central plateau and Egypt; was, and is today, well supplied with two great pools or wells of water of immense proportions. It was admirably adapted to be the capital of such a kingdom as David could organize.

## RIVAL STATES

Saul's son learned of the choice of David as the head of the southern tribes and immediately sent his troops under Abner to suppress the uprising. David's men, under Joab, as commander-in-chief, met the northern Israelite troops at Gibeon, northwest of the site of the later Jerusalem. As in

rough border fighting the generals agreed that the contest should be begun by a duel. Twelve men from each army met and each killed the other, settling nothing. Then both armies went into the fight, and the northern army was beaten, routed, and driven from the field. At Abner's appeal the battle ceased and the armies of both states returned to their respective capitals. David's friendly relations with the Philistines probably kept them immune from attack by them, while the house of Saul was still on a war basis with its old enemy.

## DAVID SECURES FULL CONTROL

The power behind the throne in Mahanaim was Abner, the head of the army. Seeing the decline of Ish-bosheth's power and the growth of David's influence, Abner made a trip to Hebron to turn over the remnant of Saul's kingdom to this thrifty new ruler of the south. Though treacherously slain by Joab, Abner's diplomatic journey was entirely successful. He made a league with David whereby the remaining shattered authority of Saul's house was transferred to him. In true Oriental fashion, two servants of Ish-bosheth slipped into the house of the latter while he was taking his noon nap and killed him, cut off his head, and carried it to David at Hebron—a sure symbol of the exit of Saul's house. As in another case (2 Sam. 1 : 15), David executed justice on the dastardly murderers of a helpless, innocent man (2 Sam. 4 : 7-12). Both of these acts, however, symbolized the transfer of the northern realm of Israel to David as their recognized head and ruler.

## DAVID CHANGES THE CAPITAL TO JERUSALEM

As soon as the diplomatic transfer of authority had been made to David, and word of it had reached the people, all Israel came together at Hebron and anointed him king over all the land. In looking about for a capital nearer the center of the country David selected Jerusalem, then held by the Jebusites. When he approached it with his forces the Jebusites mocked him and challenged him to take them. The challenge was accepted, the fortress taken and occupied by David. He named it the " City of David," and built up walls to strengthen its position and defend it from any possible enemy.

## DAVID'S WARS WITH THE PHILISTINES

The report of David's coronation over all Israel was too much for the Philistines. They had been at peace with him while he was ruling simply the southern tribes, but as soon as he assumed authority over territory which they had conquered and held in the north they were ready to dispute his rights. Their great army drove straight toward Jerusalem. David went out with his troops, met, and routed them in the valley of Rephaim southwest of the capital. One great defeat did not convince them of the real power of the new king over all Israel. They carried on border warfare and tried to force David's people back into the uplands. Another large army was mustered in the same valley, only to meet the same kind of disaster, except that in this fight the Philistines were beaten "from Geba to Gezer." This was practically the last battle in Israel's war for independence. The Philistines were forced to yield their sway over the Israelites of the north to the new and stronger power now centered in Jerusalem.

## DAVID CONSOLIDATES HIS KINGDOM

The conquest of the Philistines, and the crushing of several Canaanite fortresses hitherto untaken, left David free to organize his kingdom around his new capital as a national center. To unite the religious sentiment of the nation, David had the "ark of the covenant" transferred from Kirjath-jearim, where it had remained for long years, to Jerusalem, and placed in a tent convenient for service. This was done with elaborate ceremony and a flood of instrumental music by David and his musicians. This act helped cement the tribes not only into a religious but a political union. David's wise and far-seeing policy and the threatening attitude of his enemies on every side were large factors in making one people of the former independent and isolated tribes.

## DAVID'S LIMITED BOUNDARIES

The boundary lines of David's sway are quite certainly known at this time. On the west the conquered Philistines and the Mediterranean Sea from Joppa northward to Phœnicia was his line. On the north, Phœnicia had no military aspirations and so required no defensive works on the part of David. On the northeast the Syrians, centered at Damas-

cus, then a prosperous city, were an alert commercial and military people who required watching. But the most unsafe boundaries were the east and southeast, where the warlike and suspicious Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites were crowding westward and closely watching the movements of the new Israelite monarch. These boundary lines included all the territory occupied by the once independent tribes who settled at various times on the plateaus and hilltops among the Canaanites. They were now being organized into a political and military unit, possessed of the powers of a strong kingdom under a princely king.

## DAVID'S WARS OF CONQUEST

The restless and ambitious Moabites and Ammonites on the east were only too ready to stir up a fight with Israel. Challenged and insulted by the open acts of those two border peoples, David rallied his forces and gave them a severe beating, and pushed his lines to the edge of the desert. One of the allies of the Ammonites was the Aramæan race of the north. Those well-equipped and more civilized peoples gave David's forces a hard fight, but they were forced to yield, and the boundaries of Israel were extended to the banks of the great river Euphrates. On the southeast the Edomites were driven into their mountain fortresses, and David controlled the roads down to the east arm of the Red Sea. Thus within a few short years Israel not only controlled all Canaan, but expanded the boundary lines on the northeast to the Euphrates River, and on the east to the Arabian desert, and on the southeast to the Gulf of Akaba—fully three times as large as the territory of the original Canaan.

## DAVID'S TROUBLES AT HOME

The kingdom had been expanded at too high a rate of speed. It was scarcely possible in so short a time to weld all the tribes of Israel and the alien conquered peoples into one united, harmonious, and strong kingdom. Old Hebrew factions north and south, non-Israelitish peoples and tribes, and a sprinkling of other alien races gave David a difficult social and racial problem. His own mistakes as a monarch seemed to start a blaze that could not be extinguished. Disaffection among the people fanned the flame, and out of his own household came the first plotter against the throne, Absa-

lom, his own son. David saw the storm rising from the southern sky, and fled across the Jordan to the more friendly northeastern tribes. Absalom's rebellion grew in popularity and power, and he pursued the fleeing monarch, his father, across the East-Jordan highlands. A terrific battle was fought, in which Joab's forces of David were completely victorious, and the rebel Absalom was shot through with a dart as he hung helpless by his hair in an oak tree. An incipient rebellion also broke out in the north, and was crushed in the far north city of Abel-beth-maacall.

## DAVID'S PEACEFUL ACTIVITIES

The crushing of the two uprisings against the Hebrew king left David and his government still intact. He could well spend the remainder of his life in the development of the arts of peace. In his earlier days he was an accomplished musician, if the references and hints in the Old Testament are to be interpreted literally. He was also a poet of ability, as seen in the purely secular verse of 2 Samuel 1 : 19-27, to say nothing of the marvelous poems of 2 Samuel 22 and 23. Several psalms in the Psalter are also attributed to him as their author, though the whole book of Psalms was written by many men. David also perfected the system of worship at Jerusalem and made it an attractive center to his whole realm. He also made plans and gathered material for a temple to Jehovah, but the carrying out of those plans was left to his successor on the throne. Israel had now become a unified and strong kingdom, ready to be a force among the nations.

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**Biblical Material:** 2 Samuel; 1 Chronicles 10 to 29.

**Central Thought:** David's commanding energy for the people under his influence.

**Lesson:** David's implicit honesty of purpose toward God in spite of all his faults.

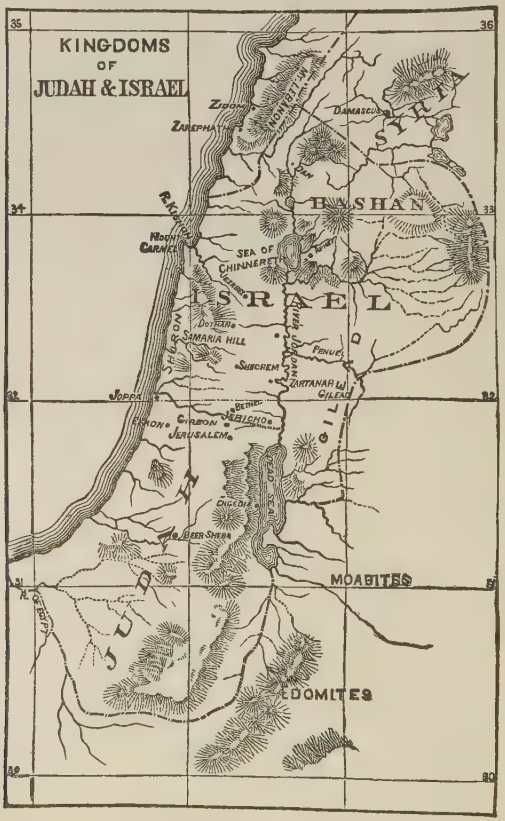
## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. What made David popular in Israel?
2. Mention instances of his kindness and fine sense of justice.

3. What was his attitude toward Abner, chief of the forces of Saul's former army?
4. Why did he bring the ark to Jerusalem?

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. David's favor with the Philistines.
2. David's wars with the Philistines.
3. David's provision for worship at Jerusalem.
4. David's musical talent.



# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON VII

## DAVID EXPANDED THE NATION

Let your first task be the reading of Second Samuel and 1 Chronicles 10 to 29. Note carefully the whole narrative and the chief points. Make a study of the complicated situation which lies back of David's first coronation at Hebron. The extent of Philistine authority over all Palestine and David's relation thereto should be thoroughly understood before you try to explain David's conquests.

The reestablishment of the state under David's guidance is far too large a lesson for one day. But the multitude of details must be set aside for the main issues. Saul did not leave a very desirable bequest to his successor. The tribal unity under Saul had been shattered by the persistent blows of the Philistines. David's former residence as a refugee in Philistia had the appearance at least of an agreement with that people against Saul, King of Israel. Saul's tragical death, and the defeat of his army at Mount Gilboa, left the plight of Israel in the hands of any leader who should arise. David became that leader and the people of the south elected him as their king—a democratic king.

Emphasize the political chaos which he found and his daring moves to restore order. His relations with the rival house of Saul, at Mahanaim, were both diplomatic and sincere. The impossible political position of Ishbosheth's sway after the defeat of his forces by David's army soon led Abner to make his fatal journey to Hebron to hand over to David the scattered remnants of the torn realm of his master Saul. Follow out as fully as possible in the time assigned the methods by which David fought and won over the former followers of Saul. Complications with the Philistines multiplied and David found himself an enemy of his former friends. Their battles were regular and irregular, long and bitter, but David came off victor and compelled his southwestern neighbors to let him alone and to stay on their fruitful seacoast plain.

The always troublesome border raiders on the east and southeast—Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites of ancient

fame—received their dues at David's hands. Their Aramaic allies of Damascus and farther north, with all their cavalry and chariotry and infantry, fell before the military stroke of the new King of Israel. Point out the extreme boundaries of the new realm, and note the conglomeration of tribes and races that should be amalgamated if they were to become a unified state. The military ability of Joab and David made all this possible.

Indicate the weak spots in the state and how the king tried to mend them. After comparative quiet had been achieved, specify the various means adopted by David to build up his people religiously and to make Jerusalem a real center of the new state.

**Every-day Lesson:** David's sense of right and justice, his inherent kindness to descendants of his true friends, and his faith in God stand out and shine far above the sordid sins which he committed at a weak moment in his career.

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# LESSON VIII

# SOLOMON PERFECTS AND WRECKS A KINGDOM

## DAVID'S CLOSING DAYS

His once glorious kingdom became dimmed by the tragedies of his later life. David's one sin and those of his sons hung like a pall over the regal household. No public declaration had been made of the name of the successor to his throne. Absalom's rebellion against his father had utterly collapsed and the beloved son was slain. The oldest son, Adonijah, naturally expected that he would be his father's successor on the throne. To make his expectation a reality he hatched a little conspiracy and made a feast to his favorites down below the city of Jerusalem. Word of this conspiracy reached the ears of David and he hastened to proclaim Solomon his successor with due form and ceremony down at Gihon.

## ORIENTAL PRECAUTIONS

The blast of the trumpet and the shout of the Solomon party echoed through the valley. They startled Adonijah and his group of supporters just as they concluded the feast of coronation. With alarm each one went his way, conscious of the possible penalty of rebellion which might follow him. Adonijah fled for refuge to the horns of the altar and refused to leave them until Solomon promised to spare his life. But the presence of so many friends of Adonijah's claim was dangerous to Solomon's throne. In true Oriental fashion, on one pretext or another, Solomon finally put out of the way, either by death or other restrictions, every one who had been actively interested in the promotion of Adonijah. Among those who suffered thus were Adonijah himself; Abiathar the priest; Joab, commander-in-chief of David's great armies; and Shimei, who had cursed David in his flight from Absalom. Having cleared his court of those who might jeopard-

ize the safety of his throne, Solomon could turn his attention to the development of his kingdom.

## FOREIGN ALLIANCES

Solomon inherited from his father, David, a reasonably satisfied realm of large dimensions. Within its boundaries were several peoples who could not readily amalgamate with Israel religiously or even politically. Such were the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Hittites. In close proximity to Solomon's boundaries were other and larger peoples whose friendship and trade were important factors in the future of Israel. Phœnicia and Egypt belonged to this class. In real Oriental style Solomon sought and concluded marriage alliances with the daughter of the King of Egypt, with a princess of Sidon in Phœnicia, and with women of all the smaller groups of peoples whom he had inherited from David his father. Solomon's political and domestic alliances became a state policy that prevailed more or less down through Israel's independent history.

## MILITARY DEFENSES

To protect his inherited kingdom Solomon built several formidable fortresses. On the southwest the King of Egypt captured the city of Gezer, slew its old Canaanite population, and gave it as a present to his daughter, Solomon's wife. Solomon built it as a protection for the southwest. Megiddo, on the edge of the plain of Esdraelon, was fortified to guard the great highway between Damascus and Phœnicia on the north and Egypt the south. Hazor, in upper Galilee, and Tamar, in the desert, were strongly built for the defense of the adjoining territory. Solomon also built cities for the different divisions of his army, for stores, and for occupation.

## COMMERCIAL EXPANSION

Solomon's domestic alliances were the first step only toward political and commercial agreements. With each of the countries and peoples involved Israel entered into economic and trade relations. Egypt on the southwest (1 Kings 10 : 28, 29), Tyre and Sidon on the north (chap. 5), and the land of the Queen of Sheba (10 : 1-10) were favored nations. Besides land trade Solomon built ships, and with Phœnician sailors they rode over the main to many foreign shores (9 :

26-28), whence they brought to Solomon's treasury fabulous sums of gold and precious stones (10 : 14-22). Solomon's revenues from home and foreign trade gave him almost limitless means for the beautifying of his capital and the extension of his court.

## MATERIAL FOR THE TEMPLE

David had left to his successor the glad task of building a temple to Jehovah in Jerusalem. Solomon's friendly relations with the Phœnicians solved the problem. There was Mount Lebanon, of Phœnicia, with its unlimited supply of cedar trees for timber. Solomon had a surplus of wheat, oil, and other food. They two, Hiram and Solomon, concluded a trade agreement. Solomon levied on the foreign populations in his realm and sent to the mountains seventy thousand burden-bearers and eighty thousand hewers of wood (1 Kings 5 : 15, 16), besides overseers. The timber was shot down the mountainside and fastened in rafts on the Mediterranean Sea and floated to Joppa, thence broken up and dragged to Jerusalem. Stone was secured on the site of Jerusalem.

## BUILDING THE TEMPLE

For seven long years the temple was rising to its completion, a beautiful structure of elaborate plan and skilful execution, under the direction of Hiram, a Tyrian artist. (1 Kings 7 : 13ff.) Its general plan was not unlike that of an Egyptian temple, with its forecourt, court, and holy place. It was built probably on the very site of the present Mosque of Omar, over the rough limestone rock which was the possible site of the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. (2 Sam. 24 : 18-25.) It was lavishly decorated with elaborate carvings of pomegranates, lily work, checker work, chain work, and molten forms of exquisite taste. Gold and silver were everywhere to be seen, and the vessels and implements of service were wrought in the highest art of the times. Better than all, this temple was to be the center of the worship of Israel's God, the sacred spot to which henceforth all eyes should be turned on the sacred days of the Jewish calendar.

## SOLOMON'S COURT

Now that the royal household consisted of many supposedly elegant foreign ladies, and the king's coffers were

well filled with gold and silver, and the needs of Israel religiously had been met by the temple of Jehovah, Solomon gave large attention to the requirements of his own court. It took thirteen years to erect the complex of royal buildings that seemed necessary to meet the needs of his kingdom and his capital. He organized a full retinue of servants, of commissary agents, of tax-collectors, of chamberlains, and all the other manifold lackeys that made up the personnel of a fully equipped Oriental court. Truly it was Solomon and all his glory.

## SUPERIOR WISDOM

The king was the final appeal in Oriental lands. He was the spokesman for the people in all national affairs, and his decision stood. Solomon seems to have requested that of all personal endowments he should have wisdom and understanding. It may have been early in his career that he was put to the test by two desperate women and he won. The Kings' account (1 Kings 4 : 30, 31) says that "Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men." Proverbs and songs seem to have been his strong points. "And there came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom" (ver. 34).

## SOLOMON'S MISTAKES

Solomon began by loving Jehovah, but after a while his power turned his head and his heart. Each of his wives required her own house and place of worship, and she got it. Solomon built such shrines for all his foreign wives, "who burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods" (1 Kings 11 : 8). That was bad enough, but he went farther. "When Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites" (11 : 4, 5). "Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the mount that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon" (11 : 7). In other words, Solomon's idolatrous wives chilled and throttled

his love for Jehovah, warped his religious motives, and threw confusion into the religious lives of his subjects.

## REVOLTS IN SOLOMON'S KINGDOM

A bad condition of the heart affects all parts of the body. It weakens and disables the energies of the whole system. Solomon's policy and defection affected the whole body politic. His heavy taxes, his levy on the services of alien peoples, and his own disaffection from the religion of the God of Israel broke down his authority over the distant districts of his realm and irritated the loyalty of some of his own home officials. Off to the southeast, Hadad, the Edomite, fled to Egypt to escape the oppression of Israel. Up among the Aramæans, near the Euphrates, Rezon gathered an army and forcibly captured Damascus and made himself king of all Syria. Right in Jerusalem among his own servants there was restlessness and revolt. Jeroboam, the head of the labor forces of the house of Joseph, broke with his royal master and fled to the land of Egypt. As he was passing out of the city the prophet Ahijah met him and took a new garment off his own shoulders and tore it into twelve pieces, and gave Jeroboam ten of them with the message of God: "I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to thee" (1 Kings 11 : 31).

Solomon's ambition had overreached itself. His attempt to reach the highest point in the splendor of his court lifted him entirely above the interests of his own nation, resulting in the conditions that we find in the last years of his reign. His people were disaffected, discouraged, and disheartened to the point of revolt. The glories of the climax period had faded away. The authority of the earlier days had waned, and the unity of the kingdom had broken almost into its component parts. The poor wise old "fool" led his kingdom to the top of the hill only to lead it headlong down on the other side. The glory of David's realm had reached the zenith and then descended almost to a setting on the horizon of Israel's history.

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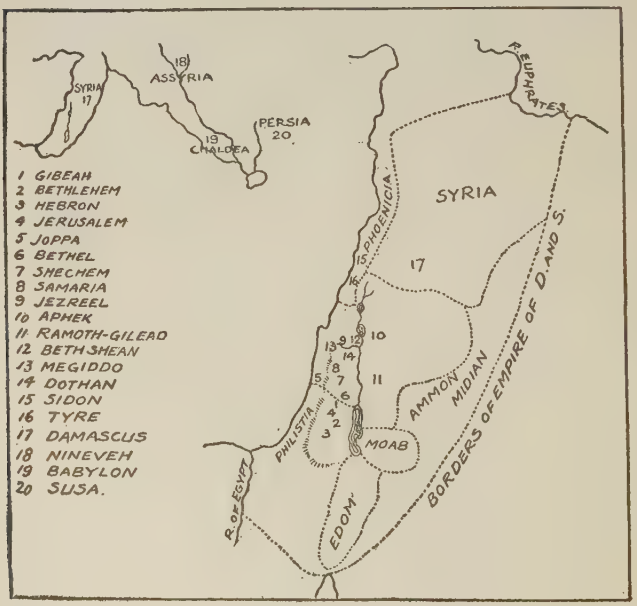
**Biblical Material:** 1 Kings 1 to 11; 2 Chronicles 1 to 9.
**Central Thought:** The danger of success.
**Lesson:** Guard your friendships.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. How did Solomon protect his throne?
2. What showed Solomon to be a man of great wisdom?
3. What was his unwisdom?
4. How did he oppress Israel?

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Solomon's early love for Jehovah.
2. Solomon's enthusiasm for building the temple.
3. Solomon's fatal mistakes.
4. Solomon's decline and end.



# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON VIII

## SOLOMON PERFECTS AND WRECKS A KINGDOM

The teacher's problem will be to discriminate between what is valuable and what is ephemeral in the life of Solomon. Both the beginning and the ending of his career are of first importance. The temptations of old age were too much for him. The confusions of worship bored into his soul and he lost his way in the dark—a sad exit.

Any one of the cited commentaries will give sufficient light on the stories to make plain the language used by the writer.

We observe that the records of Solomon's kingdom are greatly condensed. They crowd together in a few chapters the long years of a busy royal life. Everything advances upgrade with glory and honor, until the author gets ready to lift the curtain on the scenes of the final act. The tremendous movement of the preceding events prepared our minds for a different end.

Solomon's was a real Oriental kingdom except for the confusing mixture of foreign peoples out of which his kingdom was made. Study some ancient Oriental court, Persia's for instance, so that you may have a conception of the glory and luxury that prevailed in Jerusalem under Solomon's reign.

All ancient history is full of the various methods of forming political alliances, of concluding trade agreements such as those that Solomon made in his day. Study the resources of the Sidonian or Phœnician government up on the east Mediterranean seacoast, whence Solomon brought his cedar timber, his artisans, and his seamen for manning his ships. Read Ezekiel, chapter 27, to learn of the immense commercial activity of those Tyrian and Sidonian tradesmen and merchants.

Of course the temple of Jehovah was one of the notable achievements of Solomon. Its superb architectural features, its richness of decoration, and its supreme purpose gave it first place in his early career. Do not attempt to follow out

its details either in construction or in decoration. Note simply the great fact and its probable influence on the nation. Worthy of some study, however, is the prayer of dedication, with its prophetic outlook on the future of Israel and its appeal for divine mercy in case of apostasy.

Waste no time on the location of Ophir from which Solomon secured every three years such masses of yellow metal. The visit of the Arab Queen of Sheba was doubtless one of many such caravans that came to see the splendor of the court of Solomon.

Considerable time could be profitably spent on the reasons for Solomon's decline, on the influence over him of his many idolatrous wives, and of the breaking down of his authority over the outer districts of his realm. His far-famed wisdom was no protection against the insidious charms of his foreign companions, nor against the uprisings of discontented but influential characters even in his own house.

**Every-day Lesson:** Knowledge, wisdom, wealth, luxury are no guarantees against the downward road.

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# LESSON IX

# ISRAEL'S FATAL COURSE

## THE BREAK AT SHECHEM

The death of Solomon was the signal for the dissolution of his kingdom. The nation, however, came together at Shechem, the largest and most influential city in the tribe of Ephraim, to consider the next step. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, also came to receive his crown at the hands of the people. The northern tribes protested, and a conference was held in which they made certain demands of Rehoboam, the claimant to the throne. These demands were summarily rejected by a reply that split the remnant of Solomon's kingdom into two parts. The ambitious, tyrannical scion of Solomon's house was then and there compelled to flee for his life to Jerusalem, the old capital of his father's kingdom, and to be satisfied with a sway that included simply the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah. This was his only hope to continue his father's glory.

## THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

The disaffected northern tribes who drove Rehoboam from their territory selected as their head and ruler Jeroboam, who had fled to Egypt, but now returned at the opportune moment. The territory that fell to his realm embraced all of the East-Jordan possessions, all of the northern tribes down to a line roughly drawn from Jericho in the Jordan Valley, over the hills westward to Gezer—in all more than two-thirds of the area of Palestine proper and most of its arable lands. This territory was occupied by peoples who were far from unified politically, socially, or economically. They were shepherds on the highlands, farmers in the valleys, and traders along the highways of commerce. Religiously they were far apart. It was the same problem that faced David. How could such a mixed peoples with diverse interests and tastes be consolidated into a nation with one purpose and one goal?

## POLICY AND CAPITALS

Jeroboam saw trouble ahead. Rehoboam and the southern tribes had fled from Shechem, never to return. They were no friends of the revolting peoples. Jeroboam was thus compelled not only to defend his realm against the southern kingdom, but also to inaugurate a policy of unification. He built up and established two central or capital cities, Shechem on the west and Penuel on the east side of the Jordan. These served as civil and political centers. But there were still many among the northern tribes who had learned to worship and were faithful to the service of Jehovah. They had made their annual visits to the shrine at Jerusalem, which was in the southern kingdom. The best interests of the northern kingdom could not allow such a dangerous policy. Jeroboam conceived and carried out a scheme which he thought would meet the situation. He caused to be made two golden calves, and set up one in Dan, in the extreme north of his kingdom, and the other in Bethel, close to the southern line and within sight of Jerusalem. And then in a sympathetic and appealing strain he says: "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 12 : 28). He thus established the worship of the golden calves as a substitute for the worship of Jeohvah.

## THE OUTLOOK

The new northern kingdom embarked on high seas. The southern kingdom envied it, challenged it, and attacked it, but was disastrously beaten. Syria, on the northeast, established Damascus as its capital, located on the highway between the great powers in Mesopotamia and those in Egypt. Thus Syria grew by leaps and bounds. Its revenues and political influence threatened the peace of the new kingdoms in the south. The Philistines, on the southwest, were still on the war-path. The breaking up of the old Solomonic kingdom gave them a new opportunity of pushing up into the hills of Israel. They established themselves in a strong fortress at Gibbethon, within striking distance of the cities of southern Ephraim.

## OVERTURNINGS

Gibbethon was the scene of sieges and assassinations. While Jeroboam's son, King Nadab, was besieging that for-

tress he was put out of the way by Baasha his general, who assumed the kingdom. His son Elah, in turn, was slain in a drunken condition in Tirzah, the new capital of northern Israel, by one of his captains, Zimri, who seized the throne. At another siege of Gibbethon the people elected Omri king of northern Israel, and he hastily set out for Tirzah to take the murderous captain, but the known horrors of such a capture led Zimri to burn his palace over his own head. Thus two dynasties arose and went down at the hands of assassins, and the third lasted only seven days and its one king perished a suicide in his own palace.

## THE DYNASTY OF OMRI

Elected to the throne before the walls of Gibbethon, Omri proved to be an able general and capable statesman. He established his capital at his new city Samaria, beautifully situated and centrally located in the hills of Ephraim. His military success against the Moabites and his commercial relations with the Phœnicians gave him a name that challenged the Syrians at Damascus. Against their better-equipped armies Omri was not able to stand, but was obliged to give them certain concessions in Samaria. (1 Kings 20 : 34.) Ahab, son and successor of Omri, outstripped his father as a military leader. He met and vanquished the Syrians both on the west and on the east side of the Jordan, and compelled the King of Syria to restore the cities formerly taken from Omri and also to concede to Hebrew merchants a section of the trading-quarter of Damascus. Damascus today is a great trading center.

## AHAB'S MISTAKES

Omri's friendship with the Phœnicians was cemented by the marriage of Ahab with Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, King of Sidon. This union opened trade relations between the two countries that became mutually profitable. On the other hand, Jezebel brought with her the old Canaanite worship prevalent in Phœnicia. Ahab's sympathy with her religion led him to neglect the beliefs of his people and to offend the worshipers of Jehovah. With the connivance of her royal husband Jezebel organized at court an elaborate system of Phœnician worship. At the same time she energetically sought to stamp out the worship of Israel's God.

## ELIJAH'S TRAGIC APPEARANCE

In this critical period of the northern kingdom Elijah dropped down like a bolt of lightning from a clear sky. A rough rustic from Gilead, he sharply rebuked Ahab, challenged and beat the prophets of Baal, and finally slaughtered them at the brook Kishon at the north base of Mount Carmel. His earnestness and severity swept away all opposition except that of the defiant Jezebel. Her unscrupulous attitude toward right and justice and life led the prophet to avoid her wiles and take care of himself. However, Ahab often felt the sting of his rebukes and sometimes saw the fulfilment of his prophecies.

## ELISHA'S CALM MESSAGE

In contrast with the rough-and-ready words of Elijah we find the cultivated message of the prophet Elisha. His companions were rulers, statesmen, and the common people. He lived among the people and not alone among the wilds of hills and forests. He traveled about and went even as far as Damascus, and was always ready with a message to help either the king or a peasant (2 Kings 4 : 32-37) of Israel or of foreign people (5 : 1-14). Elisha was entwined in many of the events of the closing years of the dynasty of Omri and the opening of that of Jehu.

## JEHU'S REVOLT

The dynasty of Omri had outlived its usefulness and was ripe for obliteration. Elisha sent one of the young prophets to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu, the commander-in-chief of the northern army, as the next king. With terrific speed Jehu as king rode down from Ramoth-gilead, across the Jordan, and up the valley of Jezreel to the city of Jezreel to begin his murderous work. Almost with a fiendish delight he slew King Jehoram of Israel, Ahaziah of Judah, and the hated Jezebel. Baal worship and worshipers suffered the same fate, and over this carnage of bloodshed Jehu placed his throne.

## A NEW FOREIGNER—ASSYRIA

Far off to the east, on the banks of the swift Tigris River, sat the capital of a powerful empire. Its armies had been

sweeping westward for more than two centuries. It came up over the horizon while Ahab was on the throne, and he with a coalition of eleven other peoples had measured swords with its army in the far north. And Jehu paid tribute to prevent the Assyrian armies from overrunning his own kingdom. Hazael of Damascus, taking advantage of Jehu's weakness, sent his bands and raided the East-Jordan plateau and carried off numerous Israelitish captives. The Philistines, likewise, swept the western hillsides and sold the captives in foreign markets.

## JEROBOAM II

These devastating forays were disastrous to any real national prosperity. Not until the reigns of Jehoash, grandson of Jehu, and Jeroboam II, great-grandson, respectively, was Israel ready to meet and hold back the invaders. Jeroboam II wholly turned the tide, and his armies reconquered all Gilead, Damascus, and the Aramæan cities of the north. In fact, his boundary lines were larger than those of any king of Israel since the days of Solomon; hence his power greatly increased.

## AMOS AND HOSEA, PROPHETS

Northern Israel became strong and wealthy under the rule of Jeroboam II. Its rich men were oppressive, unjust, and greedy. Social abuses widely separated rich and poor. Out of Judah went the prophet Amos, a thrifty, well-to-do shepherd at Tekoa. He traveled only twenty-two miles to Bethel, one of the two sanctuaries of the northern kingdom. He may have often gone in the past to this place with the sheep and the wool of his flock, and here have learned of the frightful social abuses current in Israel. At this particular feast-time Amos attacked with caustic words the injustice and oppression so current among the high merchant lords of the kingdom. He pointed out too that such abuses would surely end in their downfall before the Assyrian lion of the east. His message was: God is just, and he requires justice and uprightness of everyone.

Another prophet arose, this one in northern Israel, who took up the same charge and dirge as Amos. Hosea's arraignment was equally severe. It condemned the different classes with scathing charges. Priest, prophet, judge, and

people all fell under his drastic words. He appealed to Israel to lean on God's love as his chief attribute.

## ANOTHER ASSYRIAN CONQUEROR—TIGLATH-PILESER IV

Neither Amos nor Hosea could make a dent in the consciences of the lords of the northern kingdom. Tiglath-pileser, however, from far-off Nineveh came to the scene. His troops picked off several small cities of Galilee and laid tribute on all the northern kingdom. One assassin after another sat on the throne, but the Assyrian monarch controlled its foreign policy, collected the taxes, and administered the government.

## SAMARIA'S DOWNFALL

The Assyrian king had carried off great numbers of captives and scattered them about in other districts of his realm. Hosea, King of Israel, was allowed under certain restrictions to hold his throne in Samaria, the capital of the depleted northern kingdom. But hopes for help from Egypt led him to rebel against his master in Assyria. Troops at once moved against the city of Samaria, and for nearly three years that city withstood the horrors of a siege. It finally fell (722 B. C.) to Sargon, King of Assyria, and 27,290 of its citizens were transported and settled in districts of Mesopotamia, Persia, and Media.

This meant the extinction of the northern kingdom and the dispersion of the best population of the former capital of that kingdom, and the breaking up of all tribal possessions outside of Judah and Benjamin. Of course the most of the poor people remained in the land, and among these the Assyrian monarch settled colonists from many lands. The amalgamation of these mixed races gave us the Samaritans of later days, whose name and fame have reached to the present time.

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**Biblical Material:** 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 17; 2 Chronicles 10 to 28; Amos and Hosea.

**Central Thought:** Israel started wrong and ended wrong.

**Lesson:** Wealth, culture, and opportunity are no guarantee of good character.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why was Rehoboam rejected by the people?
2. Why did Jeroboam set up golden calves?
3. What made Ahab famous?
4. What sins did Amos attack?

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jeroboam's religion.
2. Ahab's real self.
3. Elijah's true message.
4. Assyria as an empire.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON IX

## ISRAEL'S FATAL COURSE

The Scripture assignments in the pupils' lesson should be carefully read through to the end. Then with pencil and note-book make a second survey of the chapters, noting the events which you regard as essential in so rapid a survey of the ground. Facts rather than imagination should be the attractive feature of the study.

Only one who has tried it can appreciate the difficulty of sketching more than two hundred years of checkered history in less than two thousand words. The northern kingdom had nineteen kings, broken into nine dynasties. Of these, six kings were assassinated by usurpers and successors and one committed suicide by burning his palace over his head. The meshes of plots and counterplots, or raids and counter-raids, should not be presented to any class in the one hour assigned. The details of the reigns cannot be allowed to monopolize the teacher's time. Mention only the one or two outstanding facts of each important reign, and pass on over the carnage and bloodshed of the period. No wonder the ancient Goths refused to translate into their native tongue and introduce to their already too warlike people the records of the books of Kings.

Emphasize the political and governmental policies of the different important kings, and connect with these the various religious systems which were adopted and fostered by the mixed peoples of the realm. Discover just what it was that Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had done to deserve the imprecations that the writer of Kings heaped on his head when any wicked king passed away. Relations to and complications with the southern kingdom should be omitted until the next lesson. Of course they must be mentioned occasionally, but do it simply to explain the situation in hand.

The prophets of the northern kingdom were a negligible quantity until the trumpet blast of Elijah struck terror into the wicked Ahab. From that time on they were the only great moral and religious force in a kingdom devoted to

materialism and selfishness. They attacked the social injustices of the rich, they condemned the economic dishonesty of the tradesmen, and they charged the officials with being the leaders in the whole sordid game.

The one great world-power that broke into the brotherhood, if it could be so named, of the western nations was that of Assyria. Located on the upper Tigris River, it had expanded by mere military genius until it had swept every people before it to the Mediterranean Sea, and down that coast to the borders of the Egyptian Empire. The governmental policies of those Assyrian rulers appear in their methods of deporting and importing important prisoners of war. Israel's chief men were transported to other lands, and from various rebellious peoples their leaders were imported and settled in Samaria. This mammoth world-power is worth careful study.

**Every-day Life:** To harmonize the diverse elements and interests is the problem in any community and in many characters.

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# LESSON X

# JUDAH'S BULWARK OF PROPHETS AND KINGS

## JUDAH'S HUMILIATION

The break between the northern tribes and Solomon's son, Rehoboam, reduced his territory to the area of Judah and Benjamin. That was a bitter pill for Judah, but it had to be swallowed. Judah's prestige suffered from the amputation of the ten tribes, and also from her lack of participation in the world movements that touched the peoples of the north and east. She had to content herself with being a small realm, unable to cope with any of the powers of that day. But her spirit was soothed by the fact that she was practically a political and religious unit, made up of harmonious and congenial tribes. The Solomonic capital, Jerusalem, with all its world fame and glory, was still her center, and to its temple, for a time at least, everyone loyal to Jehovah came to render him service.

## JUDAH A VICTIM

The quiet of Judah's little kingdom was sorely broken up by a sudden invasion from Egypt. Shishak, a new ambitious king of that land, set out to win back some of Egypt's Asiatic provinces of other days. He drove into Judah, captured and plundered Jerusalem of its treasures, and mowed a swath up the seacoast and into Syria. His own report, recorded on the wall of Thebes, names one hundred and fifty-six cities and provinces that fell before his advance. Untold booty also was carried back to the Nile.

## NEW COMPLICATIONS WITH ISRAEL

Baasha, the King of Israel, became suspicious of Judah, and built great border ramparts at Ramah, just north of and facing Jerusalem. Asa, King of Judah, put him between two fires by purchasing with rich presents the favor and aggres-

sive attacks of Ben-hadad of Damascus, on Baasha from the north. This strategy compelled Baasha to withdraw to defend himself against the powerful Aramæan. Asa then razed the forts of Israel and used the stones to build up her own frontier fortresses at Geba and Mizpah. (1 Kings 15 : 16-22.) Syria became so aggressive that Judah saw that her best interests lay in joining forces with Israel to hold Syria in check. Thereafter, except for one short period, the two Hebrew kingdoms fought side by side or lived at peace with each other.

## PROSPEROUS AND POPULAR

Judah's reasonably close observance of the requirements of her religious services, her faith in Jehovah as God of all Israel, and her attention to the best interests of the kingdom, made this realm both prosperous and popular. Jehoshaphat reached out politically to the northern kingdom and economically to large sources of revenue among adjoining nations. His loyalty to the worship of Jehovah, to the education of his people (2 Chron. 17 : 7-9), and to the administration of justice gave him a high place in the annals of Judah.

## A DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT

Jehoshaphat's friendship for and alliance with Ahab of the northern kingdom led to the marriage of his son Jehoram with Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel—a domestic alliance between the two kingdoms. Under normal conditions that would not have been regretted, but we must remember that the prospective King of Judah, under the guidance of prophets faithful to Jehovah, was now joining heart and hand with a daughter of Jezebel, whose religious policy included the extermination of the worship of Jehovah. This infusion of the idolatrous blood of the Phœnicians into the pure strain of the descendants of David threatened the collapse of Judah's faithfulness to Jehovah. Athaliah, after the slaughter of her son Ahaziah in Jehu's revolution, seized the throne of Judah, and for six desperate years tried to guide the destinies of the southern kingdom.

## A NEW RÉGIME

With loyalty to Jehovah, the faithful priest Jehoiada and a determined populace swept the woman usurper from the throne, and once more crowned a member of the royal line

as king. The blood of Jezebel had contaminated the true blue of the earlier kings, and now only checkered success attended the ruling house. The advent of Amaziah brought new military energy to Judah. The Edomites, southeast of the Dead Sea, were defeated, humbled, and reduced to servitude. Swollen with success, Amaziah challenged the northern kingdom to a contest. The King of Israel advised against a clash, but Amaziah would not listen. He plunged into battle. His army was defeated at Beth-shemesh, and the victors drove up to Jerusalem and battered down six hundred feet of the wall of that city. They also plundered the palace and the temple of gold, silver, and vessels used in the service of Jehovah. King Amaziah thus went down in disgrace, and was slain in a conspiracy at Lachish. (2 Kings 14 : 17-20.)

## UZZIAH'S SUCCESS

The disastrous reign of Amaziah was followed by the most successful Judean king since Solomon. Uzziah was a wise administrator, a far-sighted statesman, and also improved religiously upon his predecessors. He fortified Jerusalem, reorganized the army, encouraged agriculture and animal husbandry, and collected large revenues. His success marked a climax in Judah's history, for after him Judah declined.

## ISAIAH, THE STATESMAN-PROPHET

About the year 734 B. C., Isaiah the prophet began his long life of service. Familiar with the court, he was ready to take a leading part in the conduct of the state. The temple services and the worshipers were his every-day familiarities. Hence the frankness and firmness with which he opens up on the entire system of sacrifice in Jerusalem. His charge against the ruling class for their injustice, their greed, and their laxity of life echo and reecho through the halls of his sermons. The appearance of the Assyrian hosts on the northern frontiers, and the aggressions of Damascus and northern Israel just outside the walls of Jerusalem, gave the prophet his opportunity to enter the sphere of statesmanship. With words of wisdom and faith in Jehovah he meets and counsels Ahaz, King of Judah, outside the city. The king was obstinate and insulted by the harsh words of Isaiah. They cut to the quick and brought Ahaz to recognize at least the sincerity of the speaker.

## MICAH, THE COUNTRY PROPHET

This contemporary of Isaiah was a man of the common people, of the countryside. His home was Moresheth-gath, down toward the Philistine country. His call to prophesy was rooted in his faith in Jehovah and his keen observance of the movement of world events. He saw the social abuses of his people and with unerring aim shot them through. The political intrigues of Assyria, and the certain invasion of Judah by their troops, fired his imagination. The devastation that the army would leave behind it was pictured in the terms of laying waste of the cities and villages within sight of his home.

## HEZEKIAH'S REFORMS

Whatever may have been the cause, Hezekiah began his reign with sweeping reforms. Ahaz, his father, had descended so far into the pit of idol-worship that Hezekiah, probably backed by the loyal Isaiah and the influence of other unnamed prophets, took immediate steps to clean up the temple and the city. Ahaz had filled the capital with foreign idols and strange worship, and had obliterated as far as possible the true God of Israel. Hezekiah reversed the machinery. Out of the temple he cast all foreign deities, reestablished the neglected Passover, celebrated the regular annual feasts, and restored the priests to their former position as temple officials. Isaiah, Micah, and all the prophets of the times lent their aid to the reestablishment of the principles of righteousness and worship of Jehovah within the sacred precincts of the temple.

## INTERNATIONAL COMPLICATIONS

While Hezekiah was making internal reforms the great world powers were busy plotting against one another. Samaria fell to Sargon, King of Assyria, in 722 B. C. In 717 he captured the historical fortress Carchemish, on the Euphrates, for long centuries headquarters of the Hittite Empire. In 711 he swept down through Palestine, almost to the gates of Egypt, to secure control of Philistia and a group of minor people in the west-land. Judah was so close to Egypt that a party of Hezekiah's subjects thought the two peoples should make a league against the encroachments of Assyria. Babylonia became so restive under Sargon's sway that she sent messengers to Hezekiah to invite him to join a coalition

against the Assyrians. Isaiah knew what was going on and kept close to Hezekiah as adviser and friend.

### SENNACHERIB'S INVASION 701 B. C.

Hezekiah seems to have refused longer to pay tribute to the Assyrian monarch at Nineveh. Sennacherib (705-681 B. C.) left his capital city and carried a military campaign westward to the Phœnician seacoast. Every city fell before him, except Tyre, on its "tight little island." Down along the coast the army filed until it reached the plain of Philistia, where it captured one after another of the great cities of that region. A detachment went up to Jerusalem to take it, but was not equal to the task. An Egyptian army, probably in response to a call for help, came up to aid Hezekiah, and both great armies met at Eltekeh, down on the road to Egypt. The result was a drawn battle, from which both forces quietly retired. But Jerusalem was saved and Hezekiah, counseled by Isaiah, lived in quiet and peace to the end of his days.

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**Biblical Material:** 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 20; 2 Chronicles 10 to 32.

**Central Thought:** Of the two kingdoms, the southern, that worshiped more faithfully the God of Israel, still lived.

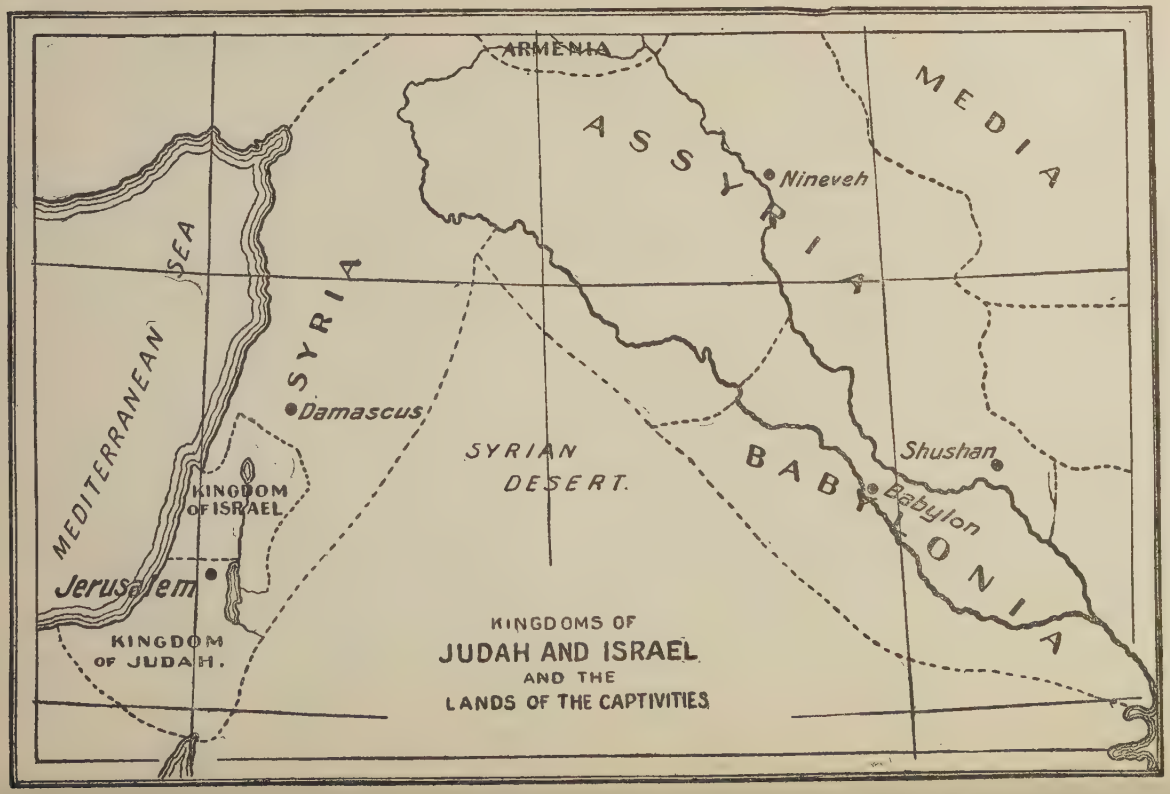
**Lesson:** The good men of Judah saved the nation.

### FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why was Judah humiliated?
2. What brought about Judah's popularity?
3. What event started her on the downward road religiously?
4. What did Isaiah contribute to Israel's strength?

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. General differences between the northern and southern kingdoms.
2. Jehoshaphat's qualities of character.
3. Hezekiah's idea of service to Jehovah.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KINGDOM
OF ISRAEL
Jerusalem
KINGDOM
OF JUDAH.
KINGDOMS OF
JUDAH AND ISRAEL
AND THE
LANDS OF THE CAPTIVITIES

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON X

## JUDAH'S BULWARK OF PROPHETS AND KINGS

This lesson is not so full of action as the previous one. Only in its later events does it touch international relations with anything like important problems. Attention should be directed to the comparatively quiet life of the early kings of Judah. Israel's expansive strength sometimes irritated the kings of Judah and put them on their guard against possible invasions from the northern kingdom. But the really Christian spirit of such a ruler as Jehoshaphat bridged over the chasm between the two kingdoms and brought about alliance. The establishment of peace was good, but what can be said of the social ties effected through the intermarriage of members of two royal families? Jehoshaphat's ambitions went further; he devised a scheme of building a mercantile marine, doubtless in imitation of Solomon, to send to Ophir for gold, but his plan was wrecked on the rocks at Ezion-geber. (1 Kings 22 : 48.)

The social and religious outcome of the marriage of Jehoram and Athaliah became well-nigh disastrous to the southern kingdom. Go somewhat into details of that narrow escape for the house of Judah. The priest Jehoiada and the faithful temple servants saved the royal house and the nation from the fearful consequences of the religion of Jezebel. Spend little time on the next clash between the two kingdoms, except to note that Amaziah's violent death was due him for his irretrievable pride. Uzziah's reign will bear inspection until success turned his head and wrecked his future. Nevertheless, he gave Judah a great name and fame among the peoples of his time. His successors never beat his record, and his name stands among the first of Judah for real ability and achievement.

The prophets who stood by the good kings of Judah should be mentioned and located in their respective regions. Chief among all was Isaiah. His close second was Micah, the country prophet from the foothills of Judah on the border of

Philistia. Their keen spiritual insight, their close observance of events, their intimate knowledge of social conditions, and their directness of speech made them a terror to the guilty and a tonic to the conscientious faithful servant of Jehovah. Out beyond their own horizon they saw the coming hosts of foreign nations to trample down the little kingdom of Judah.

Note how close Isaiah stood to Hezekiah, King of Judah, and how in each crisis the king appealed to him for counsel and help. With Hezekiah's reign this lesson closes.

**Every-day Life:** Prosperity is bound up in national devotion to righteousness.

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# LESSON XI

# JUDAH IN THE CRASH OF JERUSALEM

## MANASSEH'S HERITAGE AND POLICY

Hezekiah left a well-organized kingdom, a restored religious ritual, and a body of men loyal to the service of Jehovah. But during all the twenty-nine years of his reign there were in Judah secret worshipers of the idols which Ahaz had set up in the land. These men had been suppressed by Hezekiah. Immediately upon the coronation of the twelve-year-old lad Manasseh, these suppressed idol-devotees secured control of the reins of government. They swung the whole religious activity of the state away from the worship of Jehovah to that of the idols served by the nations "whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel" (2 Kings 21 : 2). Of Manasseh it is said: "He reared up idols for Baal, and made an Asherah, as did Ahab king of Israel, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them" (21 : 3). More than this, "Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (21 : 16). After fifty years of such detestable conduct he was taken captive by Assyria to Babylon. On solemn promise to be true to his overlord Manasseh was sent back to Jerusalem, and in five years tried in vain to undo his wickedness of a half-century. Amon, his son, succeeded him, but in two years his conduct was so reprehensible that his servants about him despatched him. (2 Kings 21 : 23.)

## JOSIAH'S REACTION

Manasseh and Amon had gone to the limit in idolatry. The better class of people could stand it no longer. They crowned Josiah, the eight-year-old son of Amon, and themselves took the helm of state. Guarding this youth were such characters as Huldah the prophetess, Hilkiah the priest, Shaphan the scribe—all loyal worshipers of Jehovah. With a group of such supporters Josiah plunged into reforms. The sadly neglected temple was cleansed and repaired; the worship that

had fallen into disuse was centralized in Jerusalem; the annual feasts were reestablished; and the nation was summoned to make a covenant of loyalty to its God. To strengthen the hands of the enthusiastic reformers, the men who were cleaning the rubbish out of the temple found the "book of law" (621 B. C.). Its message and authority were immediately recognized. An appeal to Huldah the prophetess confirmed their first impressions. Josiah, under the impetus of the words of that roll, carried out reforms to the extent of slaying the idolatrous priests. With unheard-of enthusiasm he required that hereafter all worshipers of Jehovah should do their formal service within the sacred precincts of that city.

## PROPHETIC HELPERS

Jeremiah is thought to have been born about the same year as Josiah. He began to preach (626 B. C.) while Josiah was carrying out his reforms, and probably while the mountain peoples of the northeast—the Scythians—were threatening to overrun the country. As soon as the "book of the law" had been discovered, Jeremiah (after chaps. 1 to 6) used it as a quarry for his texts. He followed its specifications with scrupulous care, and made it his authority when charging officials and people with forsaking the law of their God. Jeremiah himself was a priest from Anathoth, a little village just northeast of Jerusalem. His training made him strict and exact in his devotion to what he knew was right. Whether he faced king or people he was unflinching in doing what he regarded as duty. The clashes between the great powers of his day made life in Jerusalem one perpetual series of surprises.

Another prophet of this period of reform was Zephaniah of Jerusalem, and some kin apparently of Josiah. This man attacked the sin of social injustice which he saw about him in the capital city. He and Jeremiah were a valuable team in the drive made by Josiah against the horrible forms of idolatry which Manasseh had planted and nurtured for fifty years in Judah.

## INTERNATIONAL ERUPTIONS

Off in Nineveh the empire of Assyria was in a fatal decline. It had lost its grip on the west. Babylon in the south had already (625 B. C.) proclaimed its independence of the control of Nineveh. Indeed, that great capital city had already

been besieged by the Medes, but home troubles had compelled them to withdraw to defend their own boundaries. Egypt saw the impending breakup of the Assyrian domains and longed to get her share of them. Necoh's ambition drove him with an army into southwestern Asia to gather up the detached former provinces of the King of Assyria. He saw where his country could again recover the Asiatic possession of former lords of the Nile. His well-trained army charged upon the fortified cities of the Philistines and took them. Then the troops passed on up the coast road. Unable to go around the point of Carmel by the sea, it crossed through the pass at Megiddo, only to meet an obstruction in the form of the little army of Josiah. The battle was soon over, with Josiah slain and his army routed. Necoh was now master of all Palestine without even seeing Jerusalem. The people of Judah put Jehoahaz, a young son of Josiah, on the throne, while the Egyptian army drove northward with all speed to preempt other undefended or slightly defended districts.

## JEHOIAKIM ON THE THRONE

The sway of the people's king was all over in three months. Necoh had discovered evidences of rebellion against his authority. This he could not tolerate in one of his subjects, and so deposed him and made Jehoiakim king over Judah under the sovereignty of Egypt. This new king was a fair successor of Ahaz and Manasseh, an unscrupulous schemer who always looked out for number one. His murderous hatred of the prophets, his disregard of the law, and his readiness to count all promises merely as "scraps of paper" led Jeremiah to make him the target of most of his prophecies. He paid the taxes which Pharaoh-necoh levied against his country, until the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar completely overthrew Necoh's army at Carchemish in the far north.

As soon as the Egyptians were driven back into their homeland, and the Chaldeans had taken over the control of Palestine, Jehoiakim yielded to his new master. This enforced loyalty irritated his majesty and soon put him into a defiant mood. He was battered about by raiding troops of several of the minor people for a couple of years. At the end of that time he fell in with the promises of Egypt and broke off relations altogether with Babylonia. Nebuchadnez-

zar reached the limit of his patience, came west, overran the country, besieged Jerusalem, put the king out of the way, and set Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, on the throne. Three months only were necessary to try him out. He was seized and carried to Babylon, together with ten thousand of the best citizens of Jerusalem (597 B. C.).

## THE FALL OF NINEVEH

While Jehoiakim was paying tribute to Egypt the mountain peoples of the north poured down and surrounded Nineveh, the once military ruler of all the west-land. Two years they besieged the lion in his den and the city was finally forced to surrender—tradition says the Tigris undermined the wall and it fell into the flood, thus leaving an opening through which poured the troops of the besiegers. The king and court withdrew into the palace and burned it over their heads. (Nahum 2 : 6.) At any rate, Nineveh, the scourge of the peoples, the lion of the nations, went down never to arise.

## ZEDEKIAH'S COLLAPSE

The Chaldean king appointed another son of Josiah, Zedekiah, to the throne of Judah. With no more fixed principles than his brothers he began the final lap of Judah's course. Jeremiah the prophet was uncomfortably near the throne. He warned Zedekiah, as he had done his brothers, that his course of action would end in disaster. Anxious to be on good terms with his officers, Zedekiah would side-step the prophet's advice and follow that of his nobles. The Egyptian party in Jerusalem gained the king's attention. Egypt's fair words won the confidence of Zedekiah and the ruling lords. This meant a break with their eastern master, Nebuchadnezzar. Such treachery could not be brooked even by the lord of all western Asia.

## JERUSALEM'S CRASH (586 B. C.)

The Chaldean army, with all its siege weapons, struck west for the treacherous city perched in the top of the mountains of Judah. After nearly eighteen months of watching and waiting and battering and sapping the walls were breached. The royal party fled by night down to the Jordan Valley. But it did not escape. Zedekiah was taken and his eyes put

out, and he was carried in chains to a dungeon in Babylon. The city was looted, burned, and the walls razed to the ground. The chief families of the city were carried as captives to Babylonia, and located in communities here and there where they could be easily guarded. Jeremiah, whose advice had been, "Be true to your oath to Babylonia," was given his choice of an abode. He remained with the non-captive poor folk of the country.

## THE END OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

The fall of Jerusalem this time meant the exit of the southern kingdom. In spite of the noble lives of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Micah, Josiah, and Jeremiah, the incubus of evil, of sin, and of degrading idolatries became so heavy that she went down with a crash. Neither Israel nor Judah, with all the prestige and devotion of the prophets, could be saved from certain destruction. Court, temple, city, nation—all gone, never to return. Individuals still remained, but no king or ruler ever again held sway over the proud kingdom anciently established by David and Solomon.

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**Biblical Material:** 2 Kings 21 to 25; 2 Chronicles 33 to 36; Jeremiah 1 to 50; Zephaniah.

**Central Thought:** Certain doom of persistent evil.

**Lesson:** The faithful men of the nation, as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, were saved out of the crash.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why did Manasseh revert to the evils of Ahaz?
2. What inspired Josiah to reform Judah?
3. What evidence have we that Josiah and Jeremiah worked together for reforms?
4. How did Nahum's prophecy help Israel?

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Manasseh's varieties of idolatry.
2. Josiah's centralization of worship at Jerusalem.
3. Jeremiah's loyalty to Babylon.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON XI

## JUDAH IN THE CRASH OF JERUSALEM

The kingdom of Judah presents a different spectacle from that of Israel. Judah had nineteen kings, all in the Davidic line. Israel had nineteen kings, belonging to nine different families or dynasties. Judah's total reigns covered the time from the death of Solomon (931 B. C.) to the fall of Jerusalem (586 B. C.), a period of three hundred and forty-five years, with a stretch of six or seven years in which the usurper Athaliah held sway. Israel's total years stretched from the death of Solomon (931 B. C.) to the fall of Samaria (722 B. C.), a period of two hundred and nine years. Some brief comparisons could also be made of the chief influential men of the two kingdoms, both kings and prophets. Such an observation will show us quickly why the southern kingdom far outlived the northern.

To make such a brief survey of the two kingdoms the teacher should have at his tongue's end the list of kings and prophets who were active in both kingdoms. These can be found in any up-to-date syllabus of Old Testament history.

The great international movements of the last decade of the southern kingdom should be so carefully read up that the proper relations of those nations may stand out in the mind's eye. A few of the essentials are: The invasion of the Scythians from the northeast; the decline and fall of the empire of Assyria on the Tigris River; the rise of the new Chaldean (Babylonian) Empire at Babylon; the rejuvenation of Egypt under Pharaoh-necoh; the world importance of the rising Median kingdom in the far northeast. All these international changes find their echoes in both great and small peoples of that age. Jeremiah saw all of them break into the peace of the times and throw all the world into momentary convulsions. His loyalty to the agreement between nations stands out in shining colors. Whether agreeable or not, Jeremiah repudiated a people that repudiated its promises.

Naturally one may question the depth of the reforms of Josiah when not a single one of his sons stood true to the

religious beliefs of his father. Their bringing up must have been in the hands of those who leaned toward the practices of Manasseh. At least the prophets have no easy or safe conduct through the idolatrous and treacherous meshes of the courts of the last kings of Judah.

There is abundant material in these last one hundred and fifteen years to construct a warning that will echo through coming ages. Jeremiah had the most bitterly pathetic task that ever faced a man. The entire nation was on a toboggan for destruction, and no human being could prevent it. Preaching was all vanity and vexation of spirit. But the prophet never gave up, and then went down with his people through the crash.

**Every-day Life:** Regard for promises and agreements would have saved Judah's kingdom.

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# LESSON XII

# EXILES AND RETURNS

## EXILES IN EGYPT

The crushing of the Hebrew kingdom (586 B. C.) was the last of a series of captivities of Jerusalem, the victims of which were carried to Babylonia. But during the last century of political eruptions, before the fall of Jerusalem, Jews were migrating into all neighboring lands to avoid capture and deportation. When Jeremiah was forcibly carried down to Egypt by a small handful of the remnant left in Palestine by the Chaldean king, he found a prosperous community of Hebrews in the cities of the Delta, especially Migdol and Tahpanhes. They had become so fascinated with the worship of strange gods that the old prophet had little influence over them. At other places on the Nile, such as Memphis (Noph), they had also settled and established homes. But the recently discovered papyri at Assuan, at the foot of the first cataract of the Nile, informs us that the island of Elephantiné, in the Nile River, was the home of a thrifty Jewish colony in the fifth century B. C. (See Ezek. 29 : 10.)

## EXILES IN BABYLONIA

The successive captures of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans resulted in the carrying away of many thousands of captives over into the valley of Mesopotamia. These were distributed either in small colonies, as on the river Chebar, or were used by the monarch as slaves to carry on his stupendous building operations in the city of Babylon. The one prominent character among them was the priest-prophet Ezekiel, who early in his captivity (592 B. C.) began to preach to his fellow exiles. He lived at Tell Abib, and from this place gave his people counsel and advice. Ezekiel had probably received his education in Jerusalem under the guidance of Jeremiah. He was familiar with the city, the temple, the foreign systems of worship adopted by the people still there, and the requirements of the law. Upon his advice their communities were organized on the simple primitive plan followed in Palestine.

Jeremiah (chap. 29) had advised them to build houses, plant gardens, raise families, and make good citizens of the places where they should settle. Before many years the industrious Jews became engaged in the commercial activities of the first commercial people of the world. Their former longings (shown in Ps. 137) for the barren hills of Judea and the temple of the Lord faded away before the attractive and profitable lines of trade which they were pursuing. There were a few who remained close to Ezekiel and doubtless had a genuine longing for the homeland.

## PEASANTS IN THE HOMELAND

Most of the Jews carried into captivity were cityfolk from Jerusalem. The peasants of the country places, villages, and towns, farmers and shepherds, were left undisturbed in their homes to work the ground and to raise crops, and to keep the land from growing into a wilderness. The Chaldean king went so far as to appoint Gedaliah, a reliable kind of man, to be governor of these communities of peasants. But the assassin was there. He took his vengeance on the Chaldeans by treacherously slaying Gedaliah, and thus depriving these kingless Jews of any guiding hand. Many of those left fled to Egypt, to be under the protection of a strong government. Those who did not migrate to Egypt were exposed to the merciless raids of the nomadic peoples on the east and the advances of the Edomites on the southeast, who captured Hebron and the adjoining territory. The Palestinian Jews were circumscribed by enemies until their territory comprised an area of not much more than twenty-five miles square.

## CONQUESTS OF CYRUS

While the exiled Jews were quietly settling down to permanent abodes in Babylonia, a new leader, Cyrus the Elamite, arose on the Persian frontier. A few short years demonstrated his military genius. He swept victoriously through to Asia Minor, and then turned back down the Mesopotamian valley and gathered into his net all the remnants of the Chaldean Empire (538 B. C.). His liberal policy toward all conquered peoples was something new under the sun. Those dissatisfied, homesick, or migratory were allowed to return to their native land.

## ISRAEL'S FIRST RETURN

About two years after Cyrus' capture of Babylon a first contingent of Jewish exiles returned under Zerubbabel to their native land. One of their first activities was preparation for, and laying the foundation of, a temple which might replace in some slight respects the building which Solomon had built and the Chaldeans burned (586 B. C.). Enthusiasm and great rejoicing marked the laying of the corner-stone and the reestablishment of worship. Opposition and indifference, however, soon paralyzed the work, and not until 520 B. C. was the building resumed under the preaching of Haggai the prophet. The young prophet Zechariah joined his words with those of Haggai, and the people worked with gladness and joy to the completion of the temple in 516 B. C., when the new sanctuary was dedicated to the service of Jehovah.

## THE PLIGHT OF THE COLONY

With the temple rebuilt, the Jews were encouraged to rally their hopes and aspirations. But they were merely an insignificant colony in the great Persian Empire. A governor nominally looked after their interests, and saw that they were not deprived of their rights as citizens of the empire. There had also grown up among these Jews a class of men who loaned money at exorbitant rates, who seized the land of the poor, and in other ways crushed the ambitions of the members of the colony. The city itself had remained unwalled; any attempts to build fortifications had been frustrated by the enemies of the Jews, who were located within easy reach of Jerusalem.

## EZRA'S RETURN

Some time about 458 B. C., Ezra the priest, the scribe, having learned about the conditions in Jerusalem, secured a passport and a commission from Artaxerxes, the King of Persia, to make a trip from Babylon to Palestine. After elaborate preparations, and the testing of the genealogy of those who wished to make the journey, Ezra set out without guard or guide, and in due time reached the sacred city. Ezra was authorized by the Persian king to appoint judges and magistrates among his people, and to enforce the law. For disobedience of the law of God or of the king he was empowered to put to death, to banish, to confiscate goods, or

to imprison, as each case required. (Ezra 7 : 26.) The happy home-coming was celebrated by burnt-offerings and sacrifices within the sacred precincts of the temple. Ezra had no sooner completed the celebration of the return than he was told that the Jews had intermarried with the nations round about them, nations whose idolatries had dragged down Israel before the captivity. Ezra's grief was pathetic. He prayed with deep fervor for those who had thus allied themselves by marriage with the degraded nations of the land. A commission took up the matter and a large percentage of the men agreed to send away their foreign wives.

## NEHEMIAH'S RETURN

Nehemiah was cup-bearer to the King of Persia. Word reached him of the defenseless character of Jerusalem with its unbuilt walls. On an appeal to the king he was granted a passport and a commission to visit Palestine, the home of his forefathers. On his arrival he found conditions even worse than he had heard. After a survey by night of the ruined walls, so as to avoid suspicion as to his intentions, he organized the available people and equipped them for work and for defense. He apportioned the wall space to families and set everyone to work. The enemies of the Jews, Sanballat and Tobiah, began their series of taunts and interruptions. Nehemiah refused to stop the work or to be led into any trap that they might lay for him. The work went right ahead, and the walls were finished in spite of the threats and mockings of the jealous Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites. When the walls were safely completed Nehemiah discovered some abuses among the people. Usury was prevalent among the money-lenders, and the poor owner of a small field often lost his possessions to his greedy creditor. Nehemiah secured a promise from the people to abolish this evil. Ezra, the scribe, appeared in the broad place before the water-gate and read and interpreted to them the law of Moses. (Neh. 8 : 4-8.) Other items of neglect Nehemiah corrected. The Passover was correctly observed, the Sabbath law was enforced, mixed marriages were abolished, and the service at the temple was reorganized and restored to full standing.

This heroic and statesmanlike service of Nehemiah is one of the outstanding events in Hebrew history when all the difficulties are understood. Nehemiah has stood for a consecrated determination that spells success.

## NEHEMIAH'S GOVERNORSHIP

The energy and skill of Nehemiah in building the walls of Jerusalem, and his fine ability as an organizer of the almost helpless colony of Jews, gave him a commanding influence in the administration of law and justice. He refused to be sidetracked by the trivial and empty threats of enemies, but drove straight ahead to the goal for which he started. He was the real founder and organizer of the new Jewish state, dependent as it was on a sovereign power, but under the most favorable political conditions. Worship too was reorganized on a new basis and with better provisions for its continuance.

## RELATIONS WITH COLONIES

The reorganized and reconstructed colony at Jerusalem, with its full quota of priests and its full temple service, made Jerusalem a kind of Mecca for the faithful Jehovah worshipers, whether found in Egypt, Babylonia, or other parts of the civilized world. As the years rolled by worship became formal, sacrifices less effective, and social abuses more pronounced. Other colonies, as those in Egypt, exchanged visits with the faithful on the soil of the homeland. Those who never gave up their new homes in Babylonia still remembered and kept in touch, religiously and socially, with the less favored economically, who prided themselves on their attachment to the land of their fathers. These occasional, recurring visits between the colonies dwindled down to those of a religious character which were in vogue in the Greek period.

## THE MACCABÆAN AGE

The conquests of Alexander (333-323 B. C.) gave the Jews a new problem. Greek culture seemed to poison the religious zeal of the Jews, and to make them easy victims of the fascinating culture spread by Alexander's followers. The social, literary, and religious encroachments on the worship of the Jews reached their climax about 168 B. C., when Mattathias and his sons organized what became the Maccabæan revolt. In a few short years their skill as leaders completely overthrew the Greek armies sent against them, and they reestablished in Jerusalem a remnant of the faithful who had gone through sword and fire. (1 Maccabees.)

**Biblical Material:** Jeremiah 40 to 44 : 29; Ezekiel 1 to 24; Isaiah 40 to 49; Ezra and Nehemiah; 1 Maccabees.

**Central Thought:** Israel's testing-time in foreign lands.

**Lesson:** The penalty for sin may be slow, but it is sure.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why was Ezekiel in Babylonia?
2. What was Cyrus' policy regarding foreign peoples found in the realm?
3. What led Ezra to return to Jerusalem?
4. What was a scribe?

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Ezekiel's relation to Jeremiah.
2. Jeremiah's relation to the Egyptian exiles.
3. The Jews left in Palestine by Nebuchadnezzar after the capture of Jerusalem.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON XII

## EXILES AND RETURNS

This lesson will tax the best of teachers. Put your emphasis on only the mountain peaks of this sweep of history and you will certainly leave an impression that will stick. The dispersions of the Jews were many and to many lands. In some they formed communities of their own, where they spoke their own language, had their own religious services, and propagated their own manners and customs. In other countries they seem to have been mingled with the people, to have intermarried, and to have become fully amalgamated and practically lost from their own people.

There was a difference too between those who had been carried off forcibly by conquerors and those who had migrated voluntarily in face of some threatened disaster to a foreign land. The colonies in Egypt were probably all of the latter class, while those in Babylonia belonged to the former. There was more danger primarily to the voluntary settler, for he would soon mingle with his new associates in business, would more readily imbibe the customs and manners, and much more easily fall into the religious peculiarities about him. Jeremiah, therefore, found in Egypt a condition of things that startled even him who had seen the last decades of Judah's apostasy in Jerusalem. The pathetic features in this lesson, next to the exiles in a foreign land, are those touching the poor population who were left in Palestine after the last fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. They suffered from invading armies, from border raiders, from oppressive foreign governors, from rascals among them who robbed them and enslaved them, from lack of religious teachings, until they were all but wiped out. Even the return of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah did not rescue them from the menaces of their country life. No wonder that we find them intermarrying with their more comfortable neighbors of whatever race or tribe.

In preparing for the teaching of this lesson all the biblical material should be read with pencil and note-book in hand.

It will take some hours, but nothing more profitable can be done than that of filling the mind with a background embracing the whole dispersion and the returns of the Jews.

The Maccabæan era could make a lesson by itself, but a few minutes will suffice to sketch the character of the period and thus give a good close to the twelve lessons.

**Every-day Lesson:** National punishment became individual punishment, for individual living contributes its share to the national welfare.

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# LESSON XIII

## REVIEW OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

We have now taken a fast trip through the labyrinthian national crises of the Old Testament. Our present task is to stand on some high tower from which we can take a bird's-eye, or airplane, view of the entire sweep of history from Abraham to the Maccabees. We shall see only the mountain ranges, the high hills, and the broad plains. Foothills, valleys, and ravines will be invisible.

**I. "The Homeland of the Hebrews"** was a kind of pivot on which Israel's history turned. Its marvelous seacoast plains hugged the Mediterranean seashore from the border of Egypt on the south to the merchant city of Tyre in the far north. The next physical parallel of the land was the backbone, or western plateau, stretching from Mount Lebanon in the north to Beer-sheba down on the edge of the Sinaitic desert. On this ridge Israel's tragic history spent itself. The trough of the Jordan Valley, with its three bodies of water, from Lake Huleh to the Dead Sea, never ceases to arouse the interest and imagination of every student of history. And the eastern highlands, far above the heat of the valley on the west, were the grazing lands of the shepherds of the country. Across these four wonderful parallels the armies of Israel, Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt surged back and forth, as the fortunes of war favored or opposed them. Many of the great highways from the desert to civilization, from one civilization to another, from one great mercantile center to another passed over the land of Canaan, which was a kind of bridge between Asia and Egypt. Carefully read over again the remarks on Lesson I.

**II. "The Great Forefathers of Israel"** were men of vision, of faith, and of character. Their souls were tried by the wickedness of those among whom they sojourned. Abraham's joy in doing right, and in trying to lead others into the same pathway, gave him large influence from the very beginning of his career. From Ur of the Chaldees he wan-

dered to Haran in upper Mesopotamia, thence to Canaan, to Egypt, and back again to Canaan. Jacob's flight to Paddan-aram, to his kinsfolk, reveals the restless spirit among the Hebrews, who were only one little branch of greater migrations. Palestine seems to have been the rallying-point for the great ancestors of the Hebrews. Their characters seem to have developed and their faith to have enlarged even in the midst of peoples whose religion was merely gross materialism.

**III. "Israel Enslaved and Delivered"** covers two phases of the Israelites' life in Egypt. Far down to the southwest dwelt the ancient race of the Egyptians. Their northeastern gateway welcomed strangers from Asia, since it usually meant larger revenues and fuller treasuries. In the garden spot of the Delta the forefathers were given a place for their flocks and their families. But they stayed too long. The ambitions of Egyptian rulers snatched away their freedom and put them to work for the state. But they overdid it. The Lord found a leader who secured the slaves' release, led them out into and through the desert. They were a dry, hot, thirsty, hungry, and restless mob. Moses organized, trained, and led them up to the gateways of entrance into the promised land.

**IV. "Capturing a Country"** describes their activities for more than a lifetime. Their first regular combat for a land of their own was provoked by the refusal of the Amorites to allow them passage through their territory. Instead of granting their request, Israel was attacked. The attackers, the Amorites, were soundly beaten, and their land (already plundered from the Moabites by the Amorites) was captured, including a lot of cities, villages, and towns. Bashan's King Og was also routed, and his territory added to that already won from Sihon, King of the Amorites—all this was east of the Jordan. With the skill of a military genius Joshua led his army across the Jordan, and in a short time succeeded in winning some of the main points on the central plateau for those tribes who had not already chosen territory east of the Jordan River.

**V. "Israel's Jungle Life"** designates her almost semi-civilized warfare with the Canaanites, who were still occupying the fruitful plains, walled cities, and border fortresses. They were a lot of independent city rulers, whose isolated governments were not united in a national league. The tribes of Israel were, likewise, independent and not even

federated. Such isolations exposed all of them to sudden invasions by foreign peoples, to raids by marauding bands, and to subjection over a term of years by some power. The Israelites suffered under seven bitter oppressions, all chargeable to their neglect of Jehovah their God. Fifteen judges in all were their deliverers and their rulers in the time when they had no king, but "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21 : 25).

**VI. "Samuel, the King-maker"** was the last judge of Israel and the first maker of kings. His own career seems to have been a model of efficiency, but the official actions of his sons killed the office of judge for Israel. Samuel's grief was suppressed, and he granted the request of the people for a king. Their first democratically elected ruler, Saul, did not "make good." And at God's command Samuel tried again and found a promising youth, trained in God's out-of-doors with the sheep of the fields. Samuel's conscientious performance of duty, whether or not it was agreeable to him, gave his people an example of a true man.

**VII. "David Expanded the Nation"** which he took over at the collapse of Saul's reign. Though handicapped by circumstances he was rich in experiences. He had been obliged to live as an outlaw on the frontier and even among the Philistines, the enemies of Israel. The winsomeness of his personality, the brilliancy of his genius, the strength of his character, and his superb military leadership overcame all obstacles. He secured control not only of all Israel, but of several important border peoples. These he organized and administered with skill and success. In Jerusalem he set up a tabernacle for worship.

**VIII. "Solomon Perfects and Wrecks a Kingdom"** summarizes the reign of Israel's prize ruler. Heir to a fine realm, he worked might and main to make it a peer of any government of his day. He concluded domestic and economic alliances with his neighbors and the great powers. He expanded his commerce on land and sea until his revenues became fabulous. With such resources he constructed defenses, built the temple and palaces, and expanded his influence and power beyond all his forebears. His success became world-famous and he attracted foreign visitors. His court and his splendor dazzled them, and they by their flattery made him vain. His many wives with their many religions also spoiled him. He

forgot his own God, whom he at first faithfully served, and fell into the ways of the idolaters whom he had married as a protection to his realm. His kingdom began to disintegrate long before he went down to his fathers.

**IX. "Israel's Fatal Course"** was the kind of course she followed from the coronation of Jeroboam to the fall of Samaria before Sargon, King of Assyria (722 B. C.). Jeroboam, the first king of the northern kingdom, was a "trimmer." He did anything and everything to hold the northern tribes to himself. He built two capitals to satisfy the east and west Jordan peoples. He tried to prevent the faithful Jehovah worshipers from going to Jerusalem by setting up as substitute for the temple two calves, one at Bethel and the other at Dan. He was so successful that his followers were charged with walking in "all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sins wherewith he made Israel to sin" (1 Kings 16 : 26). Of the remaining eighteen kings of the northern kingdom, Omri, Ahab, Jehu, and Jeroboam II showed some military ability, but their example, their edicts, and their people went on the downward road that led to captivity and extinction as a kingdom.

**X. "Judah's Bulwark of Prophets and Kings"** kept her afloat one hundred and thirty-six years longer than the northern kingdom. Although Rehoboam was compelled to submit to a radical excision of his father's kingdom, he could console himself with the fact that he had in his realm the capital city with all its glories, and the temple with all its services. The southern kingdom held to one dynasty and was well supplied with faithful prophets. Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, and Hezekiah would give prestige to any line. And then add the prophets—Isaiah and Micah—and we certainly have a galaxy of men that would grace any realm. But the insidious poison of idolatry had gotten into the system and had shown itself in bad eruptions.

**XI. "Judah in the Crash of Jerusalem"** gives the terminus of the southern kingdom. The good work of Isaiah and Hezekiah seems to have been entirely neutralized by the mad career of Manasseh. He seems to have searched all lands for new gods for his pantheon in Jerusalem. And when he found them he imported both them and their rituals of worship. Josiah and Jeremiah tried to stem the slimy flood, but they finally failed. Even Josiah's sons rode with the tide, and were

carried out to sea to be lost in fatal storms. With all her impetus to do right, Judah failed. Her oath and her acts did not agree, and she was buried in the crash of Jerusalem before the arms of the Chaldeans.

**XII. "Exiles and Returns"** is a comprehensive title to point to two kinds of entities—those who went into exile, and the several returns noted in the records. The dispersion of the Jews was wide-spread, world-wide; their returns to their own land few in number and few in persons. Most foreign lands were more attractive to them than the limestone hills of Palestine. Those who returned suffered hardships and taunts at the hands of local enemies, until the intrepid Nehemiah came back and built the walls of Jerusalem and organized the colony on the basis of justice and law as laid down by Moses.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON XIII

## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

This is a test for the teacher. A bird's-eye view is always superficial, glancelike, taking in only the shining snow peaks. It sees the strong points in a landscape and gathers up impressions of the movement taking place in full view.

From Abraham to Judas Maccabæus is too long a stretch for an hour's work. Fix your time, say one hour, for the twelve lessons, then allow five minutes to a lesson, having assigned each separate lesson to a pupil on the preceding week. Or if the class and yourself prefer, spend the review on the half-dozen lessons which seem to you to be the richest in real practical teaching material. Reviews, however, are not intended to bring out new things, but to clinch the things worth while in the lessons which have been studied in the series. But in all the work insist that the class know the geography of the Bible lands. Every place mentioned should be localized on the map. That method visualizes much more sharply the events as they pass by upon the screen of history.

The national crises are most instructive, for they point out political lessons for all of us, men and women, since the latter now vote. The political and economic issues, as well as the religious, deserve careful thought and consideration, even though you should not be able to take them up in a detailed review.

Insist that the pupils should carry in their minds some one vital issue under each lesson. It might be better for the instructor to fix his own and then clinch them all.

KEYSTONE
STANDARD TRAINING COURSE

# NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY

## (*Airplane View*)

*By* A. T. ROBERTSON

A REQUIRED UNIT OF
THE GENERAL TRAINING COURSES

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TEACHER'S TEXT-BOOK

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TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY BROTHER
E. C. ROBERTSON

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# LESSON I

# THE ENVIRONMENT

## ROMAN POWER

It is a Roman world into which Jesus came. The Roman Empire sweeps clear round the Mediterranean Sea. The Parthians stand out against Rome in the East, and Picts and Scots are fighting Rome in Britain. The Germans on the north and Æthiopia to the south resist Roman aggression. But Greece, Carthage, Syria and Egypt, Gaul and Asia Minor are under Roman rule. India lay outside of this circle, with a civilization of its own that had been barely touched by Alexander the Great. China was chiefly a name to the Romans. Rome was not built in a day. No, the evolution of the tiny town in Latium to domination of all Italy and then the death grapple with Carthage covers centuries of change. Kingdom gave way to republic, and that to empire. Rome brought order into the world by sheer weight of military prowess and genius for government. Internal strife followed external conquest. Cæsar defeated Pompey at Pharsalia in 48 B. C.; Octavius and Antony won against Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in 42 B. C.; Octavius over Antony at Actium in 31 B. C. Cæsar refused to be called rex, but was greeted as divus. Octavius assumed all the titles of the rulers of the old republic and was called Augustus. Emperor is simply imperator, commander of the army. Kaiser and czar are merely modern forms of plain Cæsar. The Senate held nominal control over some of the provinces with proconsuls over them, while the emperor appointed propretors over the imperial provinces or procurators over the smaller ones like Palestine. Roman roads were a military necessity, and Roman soldiers were in Jerusalem, even in the tower of Antonia on the temple area. Roman money circulated. Roman tax-collectors (publicans) collected the tribute to Cæsar.

## GREEK CULTURE

But Alexander the Great had conquered Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Persia, before the Romans came. Roman power had to make terms with Greek culture. The result was the Græco-Roman civilization which dominated the Mediterranean world till the Goths and Vandals came. Greek philosophers, rhetoricians, poets, and sophists were everywhere. Greek

universities existed at Athens, Pergamus, Tarsus, Alexandria, and educated the youth of the world. The Greek language was the common means of communication in politics, business, religion, home life. Discoveries of papyri fragments in Egypt show that the vernacular Koiné was the current language of life in Egypt. It is called Koiné, the language common to all parts of the empire. It was not the literary Attic of four hundred years before, but the living tongue of the first century A. D. In this Greek the New Testament books were written. It was understood in Rome itself. Paul wrote in Greek to Rome. The Emperor Marcus Aurelius wrote his meditations in Greek. Greek was understood everywhere except in North Africa (Carthage), and the West or outlying districts like eastern Syria or southern Egypt. Greek art and architecture ruled. The Greeks were the school-teachers of the world, while the Romans were the military masters.

## JEWISH RELIGION

There were many religions in the world—Greek and Roman, Persian, Egyptian. Some of them had great popularity, like worship of Isis from Egypt, Cybele from Phrygia, Diana from Ephesus, Mithra from Persia. People had lost interest in the old gods, and the Cretans actually said that Zeus (Jupiter) was dead and was buried on their island. Pan was called dead. Priests winked at each other in disbelief as they kept on fooling the people. The mystery cults, like Mithraism, caught some people by their promise of redemption through saving rites. But the Jews stood out as the people with the chief religious contribution to the world. Rome gave power to the world, Greece gave culture, the Jews gave moral and religious idealism. The Jews were hated for the high standards of their prophets, and their Scriptures rebuked the self-indulgent world. The Jews were accused of worshiping an ass, and were slandered all over the world. But the Jews prepared the way for Christianity, which Paul taught was the true Judaism, the spiritual Israel. Jesus in his human life was a Jew, and the Jewish Messiah as well as the Saviour of the world as the Samaritans soon saw. But the Jews not only were the chosen people through whom the Messiah came, but they kept morality married to religion in spite of their own shortcomings. Christianity came out of Judaism into the Græco-Roman world.

## THE DIASPORA

The Jews were everywhere in the first century A. D. The chief centers were Palestine, Babylonia, Alexandria, Egypt. But they were in Corinth, Thessalonica, Antioch, Rome, in Philippi.

They at once furnished Paul a means of approach to the Gentiles and were a source of peril. They soon resented his preaching Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and Saviour for the world. The Jews were more numerous outside of Palestine than inside the homeland. They represented all the twelve tribes to whom James addressed his epistle. It is an utter mistake to suppose that all modern Jews are the descendants of Judah and Benjamin. These Jews in the Diaspora (Dispersion) had gained wealth and power in many cases as bankers and merchants. In a papyrus letter to a man, about money difficulties, dated A. D. 41, Serapion says to Heraclides, "Beware of the Jews" as money-lenders. But the Jews had the money to lend. They were expelled several times from Rome, but always came back. The middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile stood high all over the world. The Jews outside of Palestine were called Hellenistic Jews, in distinction from the Aramaic Jews of Palestine. The Palestinian Jews spoke Aramaic (some Greek also), and were less under the influence of Hellenism. Those outside spoke Greek (as well as Aramaic), and were more open to Greek culture. Paul was a Hellenist from Tarsus, but a loyal Jew. In Alexandria the Greek influence was so strong that some, like Philo, combined the Greek philosophy of Plato with the law of Moses in a curious allegorical medley. There were some who were openly Hellenizers, and imitated Greek customs and teachings. There were two centers of theology for the Jews outside of Palestine, Alexandria and Babylon. Babylonian Jews were loyal to Palestinian theology. (See the Babylonian Talmud.) Alexandrian Jews were more or less like Philo, with his Hellenized Jewish theology.

## PALESTINE

The Jews never got back all of Palestine after the exile. The Samaritans were a mixture of Jews who remained and of Gentiles who came. This mongrel race remained a thorn in the side of the returned Jews, who had as little dealing with them as possible. The Samaritans for a while had their own temple on Mount Gerizim, and continued to worship there after their temple was destroyed. A handful of Samaritans worship there even yet with their own Samaritan Pentateuch, a pitiful remnant. In Galilee the Gentiles had power and influence, especially in the coast towns and around the Lake of Galilee. It was still Galilee of the Gentiles. A busy commerce flourished in Galilee, which was densely populated. The Greek language was in common use here as in Decapolis to the east of the lake, and in Perea and Iturea where ruins of great Greek cities survive. Antiochus Epiphanes had tried hard to Hellenize the whole of Palestine, and he succeeded in part. The Romans had succeeded the hun-

dred years of Maccabean independence following the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes. But Herod the Great, the son of Antipater the Idumean upstart, had played sharp politics, and by intrigue and clever scheming had finally intrenched himself with Antony and then with Octavius, and had become vassal king of Palestine. He was king when Jesus was born, though he died in 4 B. C. On his death the country was broken up among his sons. Archelaus got Judea, Samaria, and Idumæa as Ethnarch, but lost it A. D. 6, when Roman procurators assumed rule till A. D. 42 (Herod Agrippa I as king), and again in A. D. 44. Herod Antipas was Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea 4 B. C. to A. D. 39, and Philip was Tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis from 4 B. C. to A. D. 34. The country was prosperous under Herod the Great in spite of his cruelties, and he built cities and tried to please Augustus and the Jewish people at the same time. But Jerusalem had a gymnasium, a theater, and other signs of Greek life.

## THE JEWISH PARTIES

These were either political or religious or both. The Herodians were political. They sought the restoration of the rule of Herod after the downfall of Archelaus. The Essenes were purely religious, and retired to the wilderness of Judea and kept away from the temple and from public life. They were ascetic and communistic, and discouraged marriage. They were an extreme offshoot of Pharisaism. The effort to connect John the Baptist or Jesus with the Essenes is a failure. The Sadducees were more concerned with the ecclesiastical power, and the chief priests Annas and Caiaphas were Sadducees. They reacted against Pharisaism and rejected all the oral law, and cared only for the Pentateuch. They did not believe in the resurrection or in angels, and were sympathetic toward Hellenism. The Sadducees were the ecclesiastical aristocrats of the time. The Pharisees were the popular party who were loyal to Judaism as opposed to Hellenism. They added to the Old Testament a body of oral teaching, which they held to be equal to and even superior to the written Scripture. This oral law (or Midrash) was continually added to and grew to be a burden. Finally parts of it were written down in the second century A. D., called the Mishna (second law), or comment on the Old Testament. Then later the Gemara (filling up) was added as comment on the Mishna. The result is the Talmud in two forms (Babylonian and Palestinian, with a different Gemara). The Pharisees held to the Messianic hope, but gave it a political turn. This Messiah was to throw off the Roman yoke and to set up a great Jewish kingdom in Jerusalem that would conquer the world. They taught separation from contamination of many kinds, and

had many ceremonial regulations that led to much evasion and subterfuge. Hypocrites Jesus called them because they cared more for the external than for the moral and spiritual. Jesus accused them of setting aside the word of God to establish their own traditions. They taught much truth vitiated by a wrong spirit and much error. The scribes were the chief teachers of Pharisaism. The apocalyptists were dreamers who hoped for a better day and were more spiritual in tone and life, but they expressed themselves in mystic symbolism because of fear of Roman power. They held to exaggerated ideas of a cataclysmic nature in their eschatology. There are traces of this style of teaching, which became popular in the centuries before Christ, in the Old Testament (Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Joel), while Jesus and the New Testament writers used it at times in dealing with eschatology. But Peter in his sermon at Pentecost applies the imagery of Joel to the events of that day, and shows that the language is not to be pressed by a literalistic method. There were two theological schools in Jerusalem (Hillel and Shammai), both Pharisaic. That of Hillel was a bit more liberal on some points. The Sanhedrin, the Jewish court, was composed of Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, chief priests, and elders.

## THE TEMPLE OF HEROD

Herod began 19 B. C. to repair the temple of Zerubbabel (the second temple). He was anxious to please the Jews, but they were very suspicious of him and he had to build it piecemeal, bit by bit. It was not completed till A. D. 65, and it was destroyed by Titus A. D. 70. The work was still going on during the ministry of Jesus. (John 2 : 20.) The sanctuary was patterned after the tabernacle, with the most holy place and the holy place. Around this was the court of Israel. Then lower down was the court of women. Still lower down came the court of the Gentiles, into which alone Gentiles were allowed to come. The tower of Antonia was at the northwest corner of the temple area, and was occupied by Roman soldiers. The hours of prayer were nine, twelve, and three. The priests served in turn. An elaborate ritual was observed in the various offerings. The high priest alone was allowed to enter the holy of holies, and that only once a year. The temple was the glory of Israel and one of the great buildings of the world.

## THE FEASTS

All of the great feasts brought the people to Jerusalem and to the temple, save the feast of Purim, which was observed at home a month before the Passover. The great festival of the year

was the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread (a week long), which occurred in the spring and varied with the moon (our Easter). It commemorated the deliverance from Egypt. Pentecost came fifty days later, and was the feast of first-fruits. Tabernacles came about the end of September, when the people came and dwelt in booths in gratitude for the year's harvest. The day of Atonement was the most solemn day of the year, when the high priest entered the holy of holies (the Jewish new year). The feast of dedication came toward December, to commemorate the rededication of the temple of Judas Maccabeus. The feasts played a great part in Jewish life, and brought people by many thousands from all parts of the world, especially at the Passover.

## THE SYNAGOGUE

The synagogue arose during the exile in Babylon, when the people were without the temple. The synagogue was used for both school and worship. It was called "a place of prayer" (Acts 16 : 13). Wherever there were Jews enough they would have a synagogue. In Jerusalem there were some four hundred. Each group of Jews would have one. (Acts 6 : 9.) The ruler of the synagogue had charge of the worship. The Old Testament was read in the Hebrew and explained in the Aramaic. In places where the Greek was known best, the Septuagint would be read. The synagogue was regularly attended by Jesus and Paul, and it served as a means of approach to both Jew and Greek. Many of the God-fearing Gentiles, like Cornelius, would attend the synagogue and thus come in touch with preachers of the gospel. But the time came when the Christians were no longer allowed to use the synagogue. Much more than the temple, the synagogue was a pattern for the church.

## THE SCRIPTURES

The Palestinian Jews had a threefold canon—the law, the prophets, the psalms—as we see in Luke 24 : 44. They still disputed about accepting Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. In the Diaspora, where the Septuagint was used, the Apocrypha of the Old Testament was added. There were also numerous apocalypses, like the Two Esdrases, the Book of Enoch, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, that were much used. In Palestine both the Hebrew text and the Septuagint translation into Greek were used. The Scriptures were written on papyrus rolls (or parchment), like the roll of Isaiah that was handed to Jesus at Nazareth. (Luke 4 : 17.) The scribes were students and teachers of the law, but they cared more for the sayings of the rabbis about the law than they did about the law itself. The

real meaning of Scripture, as for instance about the Messiah, was covered up by the oral teaching, so that the people knew very little of the Scripture itself.

## THE ARAMAIC LANGUAGE

The people did not speak Hebrew any more, but Aramaic, a variation from the Hebrew in certain points. The rabbis could read the Hebrew. Many people in the centers of commerce, like Cæsarea and Capernaum, knew both Aramaic and Greek (the current Koiné). Galilee, in particular, was a bilingual country. In Decapolis people spoke Greek. In Jerusalem Paul spoke both Greek and Aramaic. Jesus probably spoke Aramaic regularly save when he had a mixed crowd, as so often in Galilee and Decapolis, where he would speak Greek. The Aramaic spoken in Galilee was considered less idiomatic than that in Judea, as is seen in the case of Simon Peter.

## JEWISH HOME LIFE

Palestine was still the land of the fig, the olive, and the vine. Sheep were kept in large numbers. The people lived on the land. It was in the Dispersion that the Jews became merchants and bankers. Women were more esteemed among the Jews than among other Orientals. But they had not yet won the place that Christianity won for them. Children were counted a blessing, and the more the better. The houses were often humble, especially among the poor, with not many conveniences. The roofs were flat. Some of the homes were centers of piety, as is seen in the case of Zacharias and Elisabeth, of Joseph and Mary. Simeon and Anna show also that there were people who possessed true piety and spiritual insight.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Show the contribution made by Jew, Greek, and Roman in preparing the world for Christianity.
2. Show the difference between Jews of the Diaspora and of Palestine.
3. Distinguish between Pharisees and Sadducees.
4. Show the value of the synagogue.

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why did not all the Jews go back to Palestine?
2. How did Herod come to rule the Jews?
3. Where did the oral law come from?
4. Why did the people come to the feasts?

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON I

## THE ENVIRONMENT

The teacher should have for this lesson one of the handbooks of the interbiblical history that gives the background of the New Testament times. Some of the best of these books will be mentioned below. A Bible dictionary can be consulted also for brief descriptions of Herod, Pharisees, Sadducees, temple, etc. Some of the lives of Christ have good introductory sketches of Jewish politics, religion, and home life. One must understand that he needs to cultivate the historical imagination. He cannot think himself back into the first century A. D., with all its complex civilization, unless he knows something about Greek and Roman history, as well as the Old Testament and the history of the Jewish people, through the Persian, Greek, Maccabean, and Roman periods of the interbiblical time. One who closes the Old Testament with Malachi and opens the Gospel of Matthew is in a new world. He is in a world with Rome, not Babylon, as the center. He will meet terms on every hand that call for explanation, like Cæsar, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, publican, synagogue, procurator, Herod. The teacher who only knows the bare items of his lesson will have no reserve force, no ease, or mastery, no illustrative power, no initiative, no stimulus, no leadership. Christianity is a historical religion. It is a revelation of God in Christ, but it is a revelation rooted in historical fact. The incarnation is a fact, not a theory. Jesus was born into the world at a certain time and place. He began his earthly career in a definite historical atmosphere. It is worth all the trouble to get the facts of this environment so far as it is possible to do so. In the fulness of time Christ came; not too soon, not too late. He came to Palestine and to the Jews; not to others, and not to Rome. He came as the Messiah of promise and of hope. He came unto his own land, and his own people shut the door in his face. They crucified him for claiming to be the Messiah for whom they had so long looked. It is the task of the teacher of Christianity to see why Jesus was rejected by the Jewish leaders in spite of his great popularity with the masses. The only way to understand the conflict that came between Christ and the Pharisees is to know the history of the Jews themselves. One must be able to recreate the atmosphere of Galilee and of Jerusalem, of Nazareth and of Capernaum. The New Testament is full of geographical and historical allusions. These have only a remote meaning to one who does not know

the land and the life of the people. The New Testament is the most interesting book in all the world if only one will let it speak to him. This first lesson is of great importance to teacher and pupil who want to get a definite line of approach to the New Testament. But it is only a start. At every turn one must needs get a fresh grip on the history of the age. Living men and women come at grips with the greatest genius of all times. It was the time of all times to be alive when Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good.

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# LESSON II

# THE BEGINNINGS

## THE SOURCES FOR OUR STUDY

It is probable that disciples began early to jot down sayings of Jesus or incidents about Jesus. Papias says that Matthew wrote Logia (sayings) of Jesus in Aramaic. Modern scholars think that much of that early document is preserved in the non-Markan portions common to Matthew and Luke. One can see this for himself in any good harmony of the Gospels, as he can see that Matthew and Luke use nearly all of the Gospel of Mark. Mark drew most of his material from the speeches of Peter, whose interpreter he became. Some scraps of sayings of Jesus have been found in the Oxyrhynchus papyri. It is even possible, as Ramsay thinks, that Matthew made notes of the sayings of Jesus as he spoke, since Matthew, as a tax-collector, was in the habit of keeping important data. At any rate, Luke (1 : 1-4) says that he had access to "many" such attempts to set forth various phases of the words and work of Jesus. Besides written narratives, Luke also consulted eye-witnesses who had seen and heard Jesus. Luke himself was a contemporary of part of this period, and he made a careful sifting of all the data at his command. We know that Luke was a man of culture and literary taste, and the result in his Gospel is the most beautiful book of all times. The Gospel of John was written last and supplements the synoptic gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke), and gives the mature reflections of the beloved disciple who meets the Gnostic theory with its degrading view of the person of Jesus Christ with definite proof of the identity of Jesus and Christ and of his real deity and real humanity. He asserts his preexistence and dares to call him God. The Gospels are not accidents that merely repeat floating legends, but the greatest of all books that tell in simple language the most wonderful story of all time—the story of Jesus.

## THE SUPERNATURAL

At once we are confronted with the miraculous and the supernatural element in the narratives about Jesus. The supreme miracle is the incarnation of the Son of God in human form. One has to make up his mind about the fact at the very start.

If Jesus was only a man and different from other men only in degree, then all the Gospels have misunderstood and misrepresented him. So has Paul and all the other New Testament writers. Christianity becomes only another human invention and has no permanent claim upon men. But if Jesus is in fact both the Son of God and the Son of man, as all the Gospels and the whole New Testament take him to be, this is the great miracle, God in human form reconciling the world to himself. Nothing else is comparable to this stupendous fact. If we admit this, it is needless to quibble over this or that detail that we cannot understand. If the incarnation is not a fact, it is not worth while to bother with any part of the story. The wonders of modern science make most men more humble in saying offhand what God can and cannot do. And Luke was a Greek physician as well as a careful historian, whose work has triumphantly stood the test of the most searching modern criticism.

## THE BIRTH OF THE BAPTIST

Luke spent a couple of years in Palestine during Paul's imprisonment in Cæsarea, and so had abundant opportunity to get the facts about the birth of the Baptist and of Jesus. Zacharias and Elisabeth were long dead, of course, but some in the circle of friends would know the essential details, for "all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea" (Luke 1 : 65). The doubt of Zacharias was told also when the angel spoke to him in the temple, and how his tongue was loosed at the naming of the child. Luke may have gotten hold of notes by Elisabeth and Zacharias about the birth of this boy in the hills. Elisabeth was kin to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and had a wonderful interview with Mary before John was born. But when Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, he entered in full measure into the great destiny of his son whose career had been so graphically portrayed to him by the angel long before. It was a strange destiny that had come to this pious old couple, the gift of this little boy. Were they equal to the task? Who is equal to the task of training a boy for God, especially in these disturbing days? After their death John lived on in the wilderness waiting for God's call.

## THE BIRTH OF JESUS

We have two narratives of the birth of Jesus, one in Matthew and one in Luke. That in Matthew is from the standpoint of Joseph, that in Luke is from the standpoint of Mary. Matthew probably wrote his first. Joseph may even have written down the data as he knew them. He was greatly concerned that there

should be a record of the real facts as anyone can see. Luke may have known of the record of Matthew. If so, all the more he would be anxious to give Mary's side of the matter; though these accounts do not contradict, but supplement each other. Mary alone could tell what she alone knew. She may even have been living when Luke was in Palestine, or she may have left a record of the essential facts. Luke was a physician, and he knew how to make birth-reports. He did not doubt the story of Mary. He told it in the simple Aramaic style in which it came to him. In both Matthew and Luke the virgin birth of Jesus is set forth. An early Syriac document (Sinaitic Syriac), and a few late Greek manuscripts (Ferrar Group), say in Matthew 1 : 16 that Joseph begat Jesus, but that statement is contradicted by Matthew 1 : 18-25 in these same documents. All the early Greek manuscripts preserve the story of the virgin birth in both Matthew and Luke. Mark's Gospel only begins with the public ministry and of course has nothing about it. John's Gospel distinctly implies the virgin birth by the language in John 1 : 1, 14, 18. It was not a subject to enter into preaching, but Paul says nothing in conflict with it. Luke in his Gospel (2 : 1-7) gives chronological and historical data about the place and time of the birth of Jesus. Critics have challenged every statement here made, but they have all been vindicated—the periodical census by the papyri, the second governorship of Cyrenius by the inscriptions. Hence Luke's witness to the facts about the birth of Jesus cannot be successfully impugned today. We owe Christmas to Luke, and that alone is a big debt. Luke's Gospel has often been called the Gospel of Womanhood and of Childhood. He understood women and children as any good doctor should. The brooding of heart on Mary's part is natural as every mother knows. The shepherds only added to her wonder. Simeon's piercing words lingered in her heart till she stood by the cross with the sword clear through her heart. It is Matthew who records the coming of the Wise-men to worship the Babe of Bethlehem. Real learning fitly falls at the feet of Jesus. The jealousy of Herod is only natural as he had killed off son after son in a rage to find the right succession. There was keen interest in the humble birth of Jesus on the part of many persons, but few grasped the significance of what had taken place besides the angels who sang above the shepherds. Certainly the reigning Augustus knew naught about it, and would have cared nothing if he had known. Great events are seldom understood at the time. A little boy was born in Bethlehem and cradled in a manger because there was no room in the inn. Not Joseph and not even Mary could comprehend what the coming of the Christ-Child meant for the world. But he had come, and God his Father took care of the child and did not allow Herod's wrath and Satan's scheming to get him.

The short stay in Egypt was soon over, but Joseph and Mary did not return to Bethlehem now under the rule of Archelaus, Herod having died while they were in Egypt. His will had been suddenly changed again. So they went back to Nazareth, now under the rule of Herod Antipas, a better ruler than Archelaus, as Joseph thought and as the event proved.

## THE YEARS AT NAZARETH

Luke alone tells us anything about the long years at Nazareth where the child Jesus grew and waxed strong, filled with wisdom and with the grace of God upon him. One loves to think that Jesus had a happy childhood, full of simple joys and with increasing wistfulness as the boy Jesus faced the problem of manhood and his destiny. The one glimpse of these years in the visit to the Passover in Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old throws a flood of light in all directions. He was conscious of a peculiar relation with his Father, a dawning Messianic consciousness; but he was glad to leave the temple with the theological discussions that he loved for his home and its daily duties. Eighteen more years this most gifted of all boys remained at home and became the carpenter of the town. He was a regular attendant at the synagogue and probably the main support of the family when Joseph died. We know that his mother Mary treasured in her heart all that she knew about him. He loved the fields and flowers, the birds and all life about him. He knew the Old Testament Scriptures, and worked on and waited for God's will to be revealed in his life. One day strange news came from the Jordan that greatly interested the quiet carpenter of Nazareth. One wonders if Mary did not tell her son what the angel had told her. At any rate the heart of Jesus hungered for contact with John the Baptist. Everyone was going to the Jordan.

## THE PREACHING OF THE BAPTIST

It was a strange figure, with his rough garment of camel's-hair cloth and simple diet who had won the ear of the Jewish nation. John had felt the call of God to cry. He began in the wilderness, where he was after years of fresh study of the Old Testament and communion with God and nature. Certainly Zacharias and Elisabeth must have told him of their hopes about him. His message was new in that he announced that the Messianic kingdom was at hand. Perhaps the majority of his hearers understood him to mean the political revolution for which the Pharisees had prepared them. He used some apocalyptic imagery, but he spoke also of the Holy Spirit, and seems to have had a true appraisement of the Messiah as the Lamb of God

that was to take away the sin of the world, as the Son of God. He caught the picture of the Messiah in Isaiah rather than that in the teaching of the rabbis. His preaching called on the Jews to repent, just as if they were heathen, and to come to baptism in the Jordan River confessing their sins. All classes came, and even the Pharisees and Sadducees who were greeted as broods of snakes in the rocks in the desert. John was a reformer and a herald of righteousness, but his chief concern was to point out the Messiah who, he felt, was at hand. He watched for the sign that would prove his presence.

## THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

It was a momentous meeting when Jesus asked baptism at the hands of John. Instinctively the Baptist realized, even before the sign of the Spirit, that he was face to face with the Messiah. Since Jesus had no sin to confess, some have wondered he sought baptism. Not to do so would have been to hold aloof from the work of the Forerunner, whose mission it was to proclaim the coming of the Messiah. Jesus thus linked his work with that of John and gave approval to his work. The witness of the Father's voice and the Holy Spirit's presence gave audible and visible confirmation of the sonship of Jesus and of his Messianic mission. Those who deny that Jesus was conscious of such a mission have to get rid of the synoptic record at the very start of his work. He began his work with the Father's sanction and blessing.

## THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS

There were three of them at the very outset. The devil had worsted the first Adam and he was not going to overlook the second. It was plain that Satan understood the significance of the conflict with Jesus, who had been hailed at his baptism as the Son of God by God himself. It matters little how we regard these temptations whether external or internal. They were real and appealed to the appetite of hunger, the sense of nervous dread, the love of power. They covered the whole range of his psychic life. The round rock probably looked like a loaf of bread, and was an appeal to use his divine power for his own gratification. The second was an effort to presumptive reliance on God to make a foolish display of power. The third was an effort to incite in Jesus ambition for power by a rapid glance at the kingdoms of the world (a Satanic moving picture) that called for recognition of the devil's power and compromise that meant abandonment of the Father. The devil assumes that Jesus is the Son of God, and suggests proof as a means of arousing doubt. But Jesus was more than equal to this duel, and hurled the devil

hence by the Book of Deuteronomy. Luke says that the devil left him until another good chance came. The devil had tried to retain his power over men by ruining the only hope that the race had. It is plain that Jesus told the disciples about this struggle in one of his talks to warn them against the wiles of Satan.

## THE SERIES OF FIRST THINGS

The Baptist identified Jesus as the Messiah in the presence of some of his disciples. Two of them took him at his word and went to Jesus. Andrew was one, and apparently the beloved disciple was the other. This was as it should be, that Christ's first disciples should come from the company around the Baptist. Soon Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus as John did his brother James. Then Jesus finds Philip, and Philip brings Nathanael. So the work began—one won one. If it had kept up at that rate the world would long ago have been won to Christ. But the pace slackened, and professional ecclesiasticism took the place of personal evangelism with dire results. This was at Bethany beyond Jordan. At Cana in Galilee Jesus and this group of six followers, with the mother, were at a wedding. Here Jesus wrought his first miracle. The mother seemed to expect that he would even after he made a point of saying that they were not responsible for the situation. Jesus was not disrespectful to his mother, but his mission was now out of her hands. That is always a hard moment for a mother when her boy has slipped beyond her control into the big world about her. But it is a happy family for a while in Capernaum where even the brothers of Jesus are with him and his mother and the group of disciples. The jealousy of the brothers came later when Jesus became so prominent. In Jerusalem Jesus, at the first Passover in his public ministry, had his first clash with the ecclesiastical authorities in the temple. It was inevitable, but it was a shock for the Messiah to see the desecration and graft in his Father's house. A guilty conscience made the traders quick to run before the lash of Christ's words and his look of scorn. But the shadow of the cross was already across his path. This fact he intimated, though his hearers did not understand his symbolism.

## THE IMPRESS ON JERUSALEM

The city was stirred by the boldness of Christ's deeds and words and by his miracles. There was even enthusiasm, but Jesus did not trust himself to these would-be followers who had not counted the cost. One timid scholar, a member of the Sanhedrin and a Pharisee, Nicodemus, slipped out one night to

visit Jesus. He felt the pull of this strange teacher from Nazareth, so unlike the professional rabbis of the schools, who had a message that gripped his heart. He wanted to know more. But Jesus had no easy task in trying to make plain to this great Jewish scholar the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God. Nicodemus knew the Pharisaic rites and rules, but he could not at first see the meaning of the new birth. It is not clear that Jesus made him see it then, but it was not in vain. At a later time he took his stand for Christ, and that means that he did finally yield his heart to Christ. The scholar often has trouble with his own theories when he stands before Christ, and is not always able at once to become like a little child in simple trust.

## THE LOYALTY OF JOHN

The Baptist had baptized Jesus as the Messiah about whom he had been preaching. Later a commission from the Sanhedrin interviewed him to know if he himself was not the Messiah. But John knew how to take his own measure and was loyal to Jesus. On two successive days he joyfully pointed out Jesus as the Messiah. John went on his way, and never had the rapture of seeing Jesus again. But he held to his message. At Ænon, near to Salim, some of his friends told John of the great work that Jesus was doing and how the crowds that used to come to him were now going to Jesus. But John was too noble to fall before that subtle flattery. He was loyal to Jesus and rejoiced in his expanding power.

## IN SAMARIA

But John fell a victim to the machinations of the Pharisees whom he had denounced as broods of snakes. They inveigled him into the hands of Herod Antipas, whose adulterous marriage to Herodias he denounced. So John was in prison in Machærus. The very success of Jesus makes his stay in Judea unwise. The Pharisees were already against Jesus. So Jesus starts for Galilee, which is to be the main scene of his ministry. On the way he stops at Sychar in Samaria, and has a season of refreshing to his soul. He was thirsty and he was hungry, but he won a woman of Samaria that was a sinner and she brought the town to his feet. The Samaritans hailed Jesus as the Saviour of the whole world. Jesus was happy in this outcome. His meat was to do his Father's will.

The first year of his ministry, the year of obscurity, was spent in various parts of the country. But now he was facing the period of great activity in Galilee.

**Biblical Material:** Mark 1 : 1-14; Matthew 1 : 1 to 4 : 12; Luke 1 : 1 to 4 : 14; John 1 : 1 to 4 : 45. (Sections 1 to 36 in "Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ.")

**Central Thought:** The coming of Christ to earth.

**Lesson:** Readiness to welcome Christ.

### FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Proof that the writers of the Gospels had adequate knowledge.
2. Show the evidence for the incarnation of Jesus.
3. Show the significance of the work of the Baptist.
4. Show how Jesus met temptation.

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why was the virgin birth in Matthew and Luke and not in Mark and John?
2. Can God work a miracle?
3. Was Jesus influenced by his environment in Nazareth?
4. Was Jesus conscious of a special Messianic mission?

## PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON II

## THE BEGINNINGS

The teacher can see at once that he must be clear in his own mind about the person of Christ and God's supremacy over the universe. No one who doubts the real deity and the real humanity of Jesus can handle this lesson. He may not understand either of these truths. Most of the great things we do not understand—like light, electricity, life, death. If one is a deist or a pantheist or an atheist, he has no business teaching this lesson. We have to start somewhere and assume some things as true. Belief in a personal God, who is the creator and sustainer of the universe, precedes any discussion about Christ. God is the author of the universe, and he sustains it. We may not know how he did it and does it, but if we rule him out that closes the matter for us. If we believe in a transcendent and immanent God, we ought to have little trouble about miracles if only God wishes to make special use of his power for his own

glory. The virgin birth of Jesus confronts us at the threshold of the Gospels. Biology does not disprove it, for parthenogenesis exists today in the lower forms of life. But Matthew and Luke tell it as a miraculous event. The alternative to their narratives is to credit Jesus with being a bastard as the Talmud charges. It is not primarily a biological or a philosophical problem. We are confronted with the whole problem of Christ as the Son of God and the Son of man. This is the New Testament method of explaining the fact of the incarnation, without which fact we have no gospel and no hope. This problem faced the Christians very early. The Gnostics tried to evade it by saying that Christ was only an æon and not a real man (Docetic Gnostics). This view denied his humanity and degraded his deity. The Cerinthian Gnostics made a distinction between the man Jesus and the æon Christ (like the Jesus or Christ controversy). This issue raised the problem in an acute form and it is met in John's Gospel. The disciples did not preach about the virgin birth. They preached the resurrection of Jesus as proof of his claim to be the Son of God and the Son of man. It is held by some modern scholars that John the Baptist misunderstood the mission of Christ, and preached a political eschatological kingdom like the Pharisees and the apocalyptists of his time. But that view fails to do credit to John's spiritual insight. He was a revolutionist precisely because he was different from the men of his day. He believed in and was loyal to Jesus as Messiah. For that reason he did prepare the way for the coming of Christ, though the people, as a whole, did not rise to his level. The problem of the temptations of Jesus puzzles many people today who cannot see how as the Son of God he could be liable to temptation. The fact that he successfully resisted the onslaughts of Satan does not help them. They want a Saviour who could not be tempted in all points like as we are even though it be without sin. This difficulty is simply one of many connected with a real incarnation, the union of God with man in Christ. The thing is beyond our comprehension, just as the union of flesh and spirit in ourselves cannot be adequately explained. Life is full of mystery. We do not know the nature of God nor the nature of man. Small wonder that the combination of both God and man disturbs our logical processes which are none too reliable at best. The clash of Jesus with ecclesiasticism was inevitable. The tragedy of the whole thing is precisely this, that the religious leaders of the chosen people were so bound by their own ceremonial rules that they were blind to their own spiritual light and hope. "There stands one among you whom you know not."

This ignorance, due to prejudice and spiritual dulness, had a fatal issue.

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# LESSON III

# THE MAIN MINISTRY OF JESUS

## THE LENGTH OF THE MINISTRY

It is made plain by the Gospel of John that Jesus had a ministry in Judea before the great ministry in Galilee. John's Gospel also mentions three Passovers in Christ's ministry. (John 2 : 23; 6 : 4; 13 : 1.) There may be another (5 : 1), but there were certainly three. The Synoptic Gospels only mention the last one, at which Jesus was crucified. But for John's Gospel we should not know that the ministry of Jesus was more than a year in length, though it would have to be an inconceivably crowded year.

On the whole it is probable that there was another Passover, four in all, either John 5 : 1 or an unnamed Passover. Jesus remained away from Jerusalem a year before the end (John 6 : 4) because of the opposition to him there. We may assume, then, that the ministry of Jesus was at least two and a half years long, and most likely three and a half. He had been baptized some six months before the Passover in John 2 : 23 which he attended.

## WHY THE LONG GALILEAN MINISTRY

Jesus apparently spent a year and a half in Galilee before the season of retirement began one year before the end. (John 6 : 4.) He had already had a year of active work since his baptism in various parts of Palestine, but chiefly in Judea. The Pharisees were jubilant over the arrest of John the Baptist, and were indignant at Jesus because of his revolutionary attitude toward their favorite teachings and customs. Jesus saw that he could not go on with his all too successful work in Judea without precipitating a crisis before his hour had come. The clash at the first Passover showed this plainly. So Jesus returned to Galilee, because here the people were less under the influence of the rabbis. Hellenism had broadened the outlook of the masses in Galilee more than in Judea. So Jesus left Judea for Galilee, because his popularity in Judea had already excited the envy of the Pharisees. In Galilee up till now he had labored little, and apparently had no honor in his own country, a fact consistent with the current proverb.

## WHY CAPERNAUM AS A BASE

Jesus first gave Nazareth, the home of his boyhood, a chance. His reputation in Jerusalem had preceded him, and this visit to his home town since his baptism and growth in fame away from home had created an atmosphere of expectancy and wonder. Beneath all was a suspicion of doubt about it all, since they knew the carpenter of Nazareth and his family and had never suspected anything unusual about Jesus. The puncturing of their town pride exploded their real resentment, and it was plain that Nazareth could not be the headquarters of the work in Galilee. Capernaum had many advantages. It was on the Sea of Galilee (the modern ruins of Tell Hum) and the center of commercial activity. Simon Peter's mother-in-law had her home here, or Peter secured one here, though originally of Bethsaida. Jesus apparently made his home in Capernaum with Simon Peter. If there was a place in Palestine at all open to the new message of Jesus it was Capernaum. Four of the disciples won at Bethany beyond Jordan; two pairs of brothers—Andrew and Simon, James and John—carried on a fishing business at Capernaum, for they were partners (Luke 5 : 7), and Zebedee, father of James and John, had also hired servants with them in the business. (Mark 1 : 20.) These business men had naturally gone back to their work after some months with Jesus. But Jesus meets them again, and calls them definitely to leave their fishing and to become fishers of men, as many other laymen since have been called upon to do. The teaching utterly unlike the rabbinical tradition and method. The demons recognized Jesus as the "Holy One of God." His miracles and the healing of Peter's mother-in-law stirred the town. By sunset on the Sabbath the whole city was at Peter's door with all the sick folk, who were healed as they passed by. Again the demons cried out, "Thou art the Son of God."

## THE FIRST TOUR OF GALILEE

Mark's vivid narrative reflects Peter's eyes in telling how early next morning Jesus arose and went out to a desert place to pray for strength for the work that now pressed upon him. Peter was all upset when the crowds came again and found Jesus gone. There was nothing for Peter to do but to go and find Jesus and to urge him to return to the multitudes. But strangely enough Jesus refused to do so. The rather he took the group of four disciples and started on a tour of Galilee, the first of three formal preaching campaigns in Galilee. The country was tremendously stirred by this tour. People heard of his work all through Syria.

Multitudes came from Decapolis, Perea, and Jerusalem. It was like the days of John the Baptist, only more so. People with all sorts of diseases were healed. Even lepers were cured. Excitement ran high. When Jesus returned to Capernaum the crowds were so great that some of the sick could not even get to the door of Peter's house. Jesus was on the inside. A paralytic was actually carried to the roof by his friends and let down through a hole in the tiles, whose sins Jesus forgave before he healed him. Scribes and Pharisees were on hand now and quick to resent the assumption of divine power in forgiving sin. But Jesus stood his ground and justified his claim to such power by healing the man in the presence of all. Jesus was now the foremost figure in Palestine and even in Syria. The ecclesiastics were thoroughly alarmed at the power of the new rabbi. The call of Levi (Matthew), the tax-collector (publican), to follow Jesus, along with the four fishermen, stirred the Pharisees. Levi invited his friends among the publicans and outcasts (sinners) to a reception in honor of Jesus. It was an outrage to the Pharisaic notion of exclusiveness, like the modern caste system in India. The Pharisees were not invited, but stood outside and made ugly remarks about the fact that Jesus ate with publicans and sinners. Jesus not only defended his conduct, but defended also the failure of the disciples to keep the stated Jewish feasts on the ground that the new dispensation (Christianity) could not be grafted on to the old Judaism. Even some disciples of the Baptist joined with the Pharisees against Jesus and his disciples.

## CONTROVERSY OVER THE SABBATH

It was now plain that the Pharisees from Jerusalem were bent on crushing Jesus if they could. He did not fall in with nor fit into their ceremonialism. He was too democratic and independent of their rules and regulations. So when Jesus appeared at Jerusalem at a feast (John 5) and healed a lame man on the Sabbath, the Pharisees began to persecute Jesus. He had not only healed the man, but told him to take up his bed and carry it on the Sabbath. They attacked Jesus directly, who justified his conduct by saying, "My Father works even until now and I work." Their retort was that Jesus thus claimed equality with God. The answer of Jesus to this charge was to admit it and to prove it by a marvelous presentation of his unique relation to the Father. But Jesus left Jerusalem and apparently remained away for a year and a half, till the feast of Tabernacles in John 7. The atmosphere in Jerusalem was electric in its hostility to Jesus. But emissaries of the Jerusalem Pharisees followed Jesus to Galilee. They picked flaws with his disciples for plucking heads of wheat on the Sabbath and eating the grain

as they walked through the fields. They sat by as spies to watch him in the synagogue on the Sabbath to see if Jesus would dare to heal this man in their presence. Jesus defied the Pharisees on both occasions, and vigorously asserted his power over the Sabbath to use it for the good of man instead of for his hurt. His six arguments here against their rigid ceremonialism furnish the best interpretation of the spiritual and moral worth of man while preserving the heart of the day of rest and worship which is so sorely attacked now. But Jesus stood for spiritual reality against mechanical rules. The Pharisees were so angry that they plotted with their old enemies, the Herodians, to put Jesus to death.

## THE CHOICE OF THE TWELVE

It was clear that there was an organized conspiracy against Jesus. It was not enough for Jesus to gather scattered followers. He must meet organization with organization. So he spent a whole night on the mountain in prayer, and in the early morning he chose twelve men to be with him constantly whom he named apostles or missionaries. These men were to go to school to Jesus till they learned his doctrine of the kingdom and became imbued with his spirit and ideals. One may wonder why Jesus chose these men in preference to others. The only answer that I know is that Jesus called the twelve best men available at the time. All of them were from Galilee save Judas Iscariot, and for that reason would be less under the domination of Pharisaism. They were all men of decided gifts, though we cannot draw sharp pictures of all of them. But Jesus risked the future of his kingdom from the human side on these men. One of them turned traitor, as an occasional preacher has done since. They were none too quick to learn the full truth about the person and work of Jesus, but they did learn in the end and under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit. Who probably would have done better than they?

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

There was a great crowd of people from all the regions round, believers and unbelievers, when Jesus delivered this most famous of all his sermons. The unity of the sermon has been challenged by some, but on insufficient grounds. The report in Matthew is longer than that in Luke because Matthew gives the contrast between Christianity and Judaism, since he was writing for Jewish readers. Luke has similar sayings also. At other times Jesus undoubtedly repeated many of his sayings, very often, as all preachers and teachers do and as they ought to do, both to different audiences and to the same audience. This sermon is criticized

by some because it does not give all the great doctrines taught by Jesus. His atoning death is not in it nor is the resurrection. But we do not have a full report, and no one sermon can deal with everything. What Jesus is doing here is to set forth in broad outline his conception of righteousness in contrast with that of the rabbis, and even to that in the Old Testament. He carries the Old Testament teaching much further, goes deeper, and lifts up the loftiest ethical and moral standard of all times. But he does not neglect the spiritual basis. The Beatitudes assume the new birth as essential and picture a condition of heart impossible otherwise. Jesus puts the kingdom of God first and God's righteousness next. A new heart is necessary before one can live the new life. The Sermon on the Mount is a constant challenge to mere doctrinaires, and to all dodgers of real righteousness in private and in public life.

## A CRY FROM THE BAPTIST'S PRISON

For over a year John the Baptist had languished in the prison at Machærus, while Jesus pressed on, his work and his fame filling the whole land. One can readily see how John would be depressed by the fact that Jesus did nothing to get him out of prison. John may have felt that Jesus owed him something, because he had announced his coming, had baptized him, had identified him, and had been loyal to him throughout. Disciples of John kept bringing to him reports of new miracles wrought by Jesus and reports of his sermons. Finally news came that Jesus had actually restored to life the son of the widow of Nain. Doubt had entered the heart of the Baptist whether after all Jesus was the real Messiah or merely another forerunner like himself. One has only to picture clearly John's actual environment to see how easily such a doubt would come. At any rate, John sent two of his disciples to Jesus with the inquiry. Jesus went on with his work, and then sent the two disciples back to John with the message to tell John what they had seen him do. But Jesus added a warning for John; "Blessed is he who will find no occasion of stumbling in me." Jesus pronounced thereupon a wonderful panegyric on John. It seems almost like a pity that the messengers had gone and so were unable to tell John what Jesus said about him. Jesus placed John so high that many today are puzzled over it. Christ's standard of greatness is not that of many critics. Character is what counts with Christ. Jesus said that we today have a great advantage over John in privilege and opportunity. Men rejected John because he was so different from the world, and Jesus because he was too much like the world and ate with publicans and sinners. Preachers always have a hard time pleasing everybody.

## THE SECOND TOUR OF GALILEE

This time Jesus took the twelve apostles with him. He also had along a group of women "who ministered unto them of their substance" (Luke 8 : 3), the first mission band of women workers, blessings on them. Mary Magdalene is one of this group, and she had had seven demons cast out of her; but she was not the sinful woman who anointed Christ's feet (Luke 7 : 36-50), whose name Luke does not give. That is a senseless slander on Mary Magdalene that one finds it hard to forgive. We are not told much that took place during this tour save the blasphemous accusation of being in league with the devil, the pitiful plea of the mother of Jesus to go home with her, since Mary had come to fear that he was a bit out of his mind with all the strain and opposition, the first great group of parables (ten or more) because of the violent hostility of the Pharisees, and the cure of the wild demoniac on the hills east of the Sea of Galilee. But the story gathers in power.

## THE THIRD TOUR OF GALILEE

This time Jesus sent the apostles by twos on ahead while he followed. He had given them minute instructions. The tour had a tremendous effect and stirred the whole land. Even Herod Agrippa quaked with fear because he had at last yielded to the scheming of his wife Herodias and agreed to the death of John the Baptist because of a rash oath to her daughter Salome. Herod feared that Jesus was John the Baptist come to life again. The disciples returned all aglow with their success, but worn and weary. They told Jesus all they had said and done as they preached the gospel of the kingdom and healed the sick. It was now manifest that these men could be trained to carry on the work when Jesus was gone.

## SPECIAL TRAINING OF THE TWELVE

It is one year before the end. Matters were coming to a crisis rapidly. Jesus took the disciples with him across the lake to Bethsaida-Julias for a day of rest. But the outcome was far otherwise. The miracle of feeding the five thousand created so much excitement that the people actually tried to make Jesus king in open rebellion against Cæsar. In the synagogue next day Jesus took pains to show that he was a spiritual Messiah, with the result that they all left him save the twelve apostles. The Galilean campaign seemed to end in failure. The Pharisees took fresh courage and picked flaws with the disciples for eat-

ing with unwashed hands. So Jesus took the Twelve up to the region of Tyre and Sidon, in Phœnicia, and back, down to Decapolis, and, after a brief run over to Dalmanutha, back to Cæsarea Philippi, on Mount Hermon. Here Jesus tests the Twelve about their view of him and his mission and they show insight and loyalty. But when Jesus dares to tell them of his coming death, they show abject incapacity which is repeated time and again. They are still under the spell of the Pharisaic notion of a political kingdom. Even the Transfiguration fails to make Peter, James, and John see the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection. But Jesus persevered. He came back to Galilee and turned his face once more to Jerusalem. He had spent six months in special training of the Twelve. It is now only six months to the end.

## LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY

In Jerusalem, at the feast of Tabernacles, Jesus is attacked vigorously by his enemies. The great question was who this Jesus really was. The people were sharply divided, but Jesus had friends in the multitude from Galilee, and Nicodemus dared to take a stand for Christ before the Sanhedrin. But in the end the Pharisees attempted to stone Jesus to death, and he escaped from Jerusalem and sends seventy disciples on a tour of Judea while he and the Twelve work in Judea also. Jesus found in the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus, in Bethany near Jerusalem, a house where he could be sure of sympathy and rest. The Pharisees fight him here as in Galilee. On his return to Jerusalem, at the feast of Dedication, the explosion was so sudden and sharp that Jesus left for Bethany beyond Jordan, where John had seen Jesus for the last time.

## LATER PEREAN MINISTRY

Here in Perea Jesus met great crowds and the same hostility of the Pharisees. Some of his noblest parables came at this time, like those in Luke 14 to 18. While in Bethany, beyond Jordan, news came to Jesus that Lazarus was very ill. He did not go for two days, and then he went because he was dead. John 11 tells the wondrous story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. It made a great stir and led to a special meeting of the Sanhedrin, at which Caiaphas urged that they must put Jesus to death in order to save the nation and their own places from the Romans. He foresaw a revolution led by Jesus. So Jesus withdrew to Ephraim in the wilderness, near where the devil met him at the beginning of his ministry. Here Jesus is an exile from the ecclesiastics of Jerusalem. No doubt the devil

came again to say that it was not yet too late for Jesus to save himself by surrender to the devil's plans. But Jesus soon starts toward Jerusalem by way of Galilee and Perea. He is setting his face for the last time to meet his fate in Jerusalem. His hour is at hand.

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**Biblical Material:** Mark 1 : 15 to 10 : 52; Matthew 4 : 17 to 20 : 34; Luke 4 : 14 to 19 : 28; John 4 : 46 to 11 : 54. (Robertson's "Harmony of the Gospels," Sections 37 to 127.)

**Central Thought:** Jesus laying the foundation for his kingdom.

**Lesson:** Heroic consecration to duty in the face of all difficulties.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why did Jesus work mainly in Galilee?
2. What real success did Jesus have in Galilee?
3. Why did Jesus choose twelve apostles?
4. Why did the Pharisees oppose Jesus so?
5. Why did Jesus take the disciples away from Galilee?
6. What was the effect of raising Lazarus from the dead?

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Religious prejudice and race prejudice.
2. The Sabbath problem today.
3. The kingdom of God.
4. Preaching and teaching.
5. Parables of Jesus.
6. Miracles of Jesus.
7. Dulness of the disciples.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON III

# THE MAIN MINISTRY OF JESUS

It is no longer a simple task to get ready to teach the life of Christ. The late Dr. William Sanday spent a lifetime getting ready to write an exhaustive life of Christ. He died at the age of seventy-five without accomplishing it. There was so much preliminary work to do that he never cleared the ground for the main business. The Sunday school teacher does not have to do all this clearing of the brush. Much progress has been made in historical knowledge about the time in which Jesus lived. We know more of Palestine in its political, economic, and religious life. The Gospels have been subjected to the keenest criticism ever brought to bear upon any ancient documents. Synoptic criticism has come to a fairly unanimous conclusion, which has shown the historical worth of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, written in this order. Both Matthew and Luke seem to have used Mark's Gospel and an earlier book of sayings of Jesus. John's Gospel follows and fits additional material into the synoptic scheme. With the help of a modern harmony of the Gospels, the student today can reconstruct a reasonably clear unfolding of the life of Jesus. For most students it is a real discovery to find that struggle and conflict played so large a part in the short ministry of Jesus. It is a story of transcendent human interest, for the very reason that the only perfect Man, Son of God and Son of man, was antagonized by the organized religious forces of the time. The Pharisees first attacked Jesus because he would not conform to their rigid ecclesiastical ritual and would not accept their program for the Messianic kingdom. Then the Sadducees were also drawn in against him because his spiritual teaching disturbed their complacent economic and political alliance with Rome. In reality, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were at cross purposes, but they joined their forces in order to get Jesus out of their way. He was the disturber of those in fat places, like Caiaphas the Sadducaic high priest. I often say that Jesus had to fight the combination of the devil and the preachers. They compassed his death in the greatest tragedy of the ages, but they pulled the house down over their own heads without destroying the kingdom of God. Another astounding thing is the amazing popularity of Jesus with the masses so long as he did not contravene their cherished theology and tradition. The people were afraid of unfamiliar truth, and finally turned against Jesus because he preached the

gospel of reality instead of outward sham and show. Jesus appeared to be a religious revolutionist, an iconoclast against the established order of graft and hypocrisy. His biting words about the Pharisaic hypocrites stung like scorpions and lashed the ecclesiastics to fury. One more astonishing thing is the dulness of the twelve apostles in grasping the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God and the spiritual character of the Messiah. Pharisaism had the nation in its grip. The Gospels reflect with simple fidelity the failure of the apostles before the great Pentecost to understand the full significance of the person and mission of Jesus. This fact is in itself a proof of the truthfulness of the records. The graphic story sweeps on from the baptism in the Jordan to the last journey to Jerusalem. Jesus saw his hour coming, and he was not taken by surprise when the inevitable came to pass. Jesus was often without human sympathy, and found support in communion with the Father. The twelve apostles failed him in the crucial hours. But Jesus bore his cross and called upon those who wished to follow him to bear theirs after him. This challenge of Jesus today calls upon all heroic men and women to take their stand with him.

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# LESSON IV

# THE CULMINATION

## JESUS FACING HIS HOUR

He had seen it coming and had gone straight ahead to meet it. After the start Jesus refrained from calling himself in plain terms the Messiah because of the political expectations around that word in the popular mind. The Pharisees taught that the Messiah would throw off the Roman yoke and set up a world-wide Jewish kingdom in Jerusalem. That meant revolution. A year ago at Bethsaida-Julias the excited crowds did try to do that very thing with Jesus. (John 6 : 15.) That condition explains the refusal of Jesus to use this word about himself, though he claimed it in reality. He called himself the Son of man and even the Son of God. The people knew that he did claim to be the Messiah and Saviour, though popular opinion was much divided about Jesus. But that mattered little if the disciples remained loyal and really understood him. Great multitudes had followed Jesus on his last journey toward Jerusalem. At Jericho they were on the tiptoe of expectancy as they started up the mountain to the holy city. The crowd of Galilean followers somehow felt that now at last Jesus would announce himself as Messiah and would set up his kingdom in Jerusalem. The parable of the Pounds was spoken to allay popular excitement on this subject. In Jerusalem the people were discussing whether Jesus would defy the Sanhedrin and come to the feast of the Passover. Out at Bethany there was a great stir because Lazarus was there after coming back from the tomb, and Jesus was there. So the Sanhedrin plotted to put to death both Jesus and Lazarus.

## THE MESSIANIC PROCLAMATION

Jesus made deliberate preparation to announce himself the Messiah by a public demonstration that would leave no doubt about his claim. This was no sudden determination on the part of Jesus. He had put it off till now on purpose. He knew full well what the outcome would be. There was no prospect of convincing the Pharisees that he was the real Messiah, after he had declined to be a political revolutionist and had exposed the hollowness of their ceremonial ritualism and punctilious pietism.

The Sadducees would now stand with the Pharisees if matters came to an issue. But Jesus would make his claim, and would show the Jerusalem ecclesiastics that the sympathy of the people, especially from Galilee, was really with him. The young donkey that Jesus rode reminded some of the prophecy of Zechariah. The crowd was all agog with enthusiasm as they marched from Bethany to Jerusalem over the southern brow of the Mount of Olives. As they turned down the mountains toward Jerusalem, they burst into loud hosannas and hailed him as the King of Israel. They plucked palm-branches and flung them in his path, and threw down also their outer garments. Some of the Pharisees who saw the procession blamed other Pharisees for having made a botch of the whole business, for the whole world had gone after Jesus. Other Pharisees actually appealed to Jesus to make the multitude stop their clamor and be more orderly. But it was too late for points of decorum. The very rocks would now cry out for Jesus if men did not. But Jesus burst into tears as he saw the city into which they were marching and which would so soon crucify him. The boys in the temple courts took up the shout for Jesus under the very nose of the rabbis. It must have been a night of excitement among the twelve apostles that night at Bethany. Jesus had now crossed the Rubicon and could not draw back. They could see themselves occupying the posts of honor in the kingdom for which they had asked him (James and John certainly), and about which they had wrangled among themselves.

## THE AGONY OVER THE GREEKS

The triumphal entry had been on our Sunday. On Monday morning Jesus again went into the city and to the temple. On the way he cursed the fig-tree that had only leaves. In the temple Jesus was stirred again (comp. John 2 : 13-22) to cleanse the temple of the profanation by the grafters and traffickers. Abuses keep on coming back. But it was on this day that Philip was puzzled by the request of some Greeks present at the Passover to see Jesus. Philip took the problem to Andrew, a man of much wisdom, but he could not solve it. They both bring the problem, but not the Greeks, to Jesus. The effect on Jesus was startling, because it showed almost violently the cleavage of hate between Jew and Greek. It was plain that this middle wall of partition (Eph. 2) could only be broken down by the cross. So the heart of Jesus is torn and agitated beforehand over his own death as the only means of bringing all races to him and so together. Death lies at the bottom of life, after all, he shows. On this occasion the voice of the Father spoke words of comfort to Christ, as at his baptism and at his transfiguration. It was a time

when Jesus wanted real loyalty and not mere popular applause. Some timid souls held back, then, as now, for fear of giving offense to their friends.

## THE CONFLICT IN THE TEMPLE

On Tuesday when Jesus went to the temple to carry on his teaching he found himself confronted by a counter program. The Sanhedrin had grown so jealous and angry over his power with the people since the triumphal entry, that they had appointed a committee of Pharisees and Sadducees to challenge his authority when he appeared. The Sanhedrin was quite within its rights in demanding the authority of Jesus teaching in the temple courts. He was not a regular rabbi, and was not a graduate of any of the rabbinical schools. They expected to expose Jesus thus as a discredited teacher and to destroy his grip on the people. But Jesus gave their demand a sudden turn that at once threw them on the defensive. He asked their opinion of the source of John's baptism. Now this was in no sense a dodge, but a very pertinent inquiry; for all the human indorsement that Jesus had was from John. To be sure, he had his Father's sanction; but God's indorsement would not pass with these ecclesiastics. The turn of Jesus threw the committee into a quandary, for, whether they indorsed John or decried him, they had all to lose. The people believed in John. Jesus took advantage of their dilemma to expose them by three telling parables, which left the Sanhedrin hopelessly outwitted and enraged. The Pharisees and the Herodians sent up some of their bright students, but Jesus quickly punctured their pride and complacency in his reply about tribute to Cæsar. The Sadducees are emboldened to ask Jesus a catch question about a woman who had seven husbands, and the bearing of this on the resurrection of the dead. They were answered so completely that the Pharisees (Matt. 22 : 34) rejoiced and took fresh courage. So a lone lawyer from among the Pharisees made one more effort to trap Jesus by his question about the greatest commandment of all. The upshot of this great debate in the temple was that the enemies of Jesus were all routed. He then turned upon them with the query how David called the Messiah both Son and Lord, involving the humanity and the deity of the Messiah. The common people rejoiced greatly at the discomfiture of the rabbis. Before they could leave, and in the presence of the very crowd to whom they had appealed, Jesus denounced the Pharisees with terrible woes that blister and burn to this day. The very word "hypocrites" cut like a whip-cracker as he hurled it at them, and proved that they deserved it by the charges made against them. It was terrific, this outburst of indignation, but it was no

more than they deserved. These rabbis were engaged in a conspiracy to put to death the Messiah, the hope of the Jews and of the world. The last act of Jesus in the temple before he left it for good was to call the disciples to him after the crowd had gone and to note the offering of the poor widow who had cast into the treasury two mites, her whole living, all that she had.

## THE DOOM OF JERUSALEM

As Jesus left the temple after the terrific denunciation of the Pharisees, the apostles apparently felt a certain constraint because the cleavage between Jesus and the ecclesiastics was now complete. The hopes that had been roused by the triumphal entry now began to fade away before the fierce hostility of the rabbis and priests. Perhaps to change the subject the disciples called the attention of the Master to the beautiful stones in the temple building; but the attempt failed, for Jesus instantly foretold the coming destruction of the temple. Stunned by this reply the disciples went on with Jesus to the summit of the Mount of Olives, where the Master took his seat in full view of the temple to the west across the valley. The disciples had evidently been discussing the amazing prediction of Jesus, for Peter and James and John and Andrew came to him privately to ask what he meant by what he had said. "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24 : 3.) Three events are connected in their minds, as is plain—the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the second coming of Christ, the end of the world. The reply of Jesus deals with these questions, but not always with clear distinction. It is like a portrait that on a single canvas presents relative differences in the picture. Some of the things said by Jesus apply to the destruction of Jerusalem, some to the end of the world, some to his second coming. In other cases it is not easy to tell to which the reference applies. But Jesus expressly says that no one knows when the second coming will be, and he urges readiness for his coming as the plain duty of all by a series of wonderful parables. The destruction of Jerusalem did come to pass A. D. 70. The language of this eschatological discourse is in apocalyptic symbolism.

## POINTING OUT THE BETRAYER

That very night (Tuesday) at Bethany Jesus pointedly predicts his death after two days, while the Sanhedrin was deciding to postpone his death till the feast was over because of fear of the people who had shown their sympathy with Jesus. But events moved swiftly. Simon the leper gave a supper in honor of Jesus

on that same evening. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were there with Jesus and the Twelve. It was Mary of Bethany whose generous gift and spiritual insight so provoked Judas that he made formal protest. The reply of Jesus stung Judas to the quick, and was the last straw that turned him away from loyalty to Jesus. He had a mixture of motives, as in a rage he went that very night to the Sanhedrin and struck a bargain with them to betray Jesus during the feast in spite of the crowds of Galilean sympathizers. It was a hellish contract, and its success depended on Judas' bluffing the thing out and pretending to be still loyal to Jesus. But he did not deceive Jesus, who knew the devil had Judas in his power. At the Passover meal which Jesus probably observed at the regular time, for so John's Gospel is rightly understood, the Master plainly says that one of the Twelve was going to betray him. Judas had kept his treachery from the other disciples, but not from Jesus. They were all amazed save Judas, but even he dared to ask, "Is it I, Rabbi?" (Matt. 26 : 25.) So Judas set out on his fiendish mission while Jesus warned the rest against the tempting by the devil, but Peter in particular boasted of his courage and loyalty.

## PREPARING HIS DISCIPLES FOR THE END

With the utmost deliberation Jesus went on with the task of getting the disciples ready for his death. Up till now they had utterly failed to grasp his words on that subject. He instituted the memorial supper to carry on the meaning of his death. He made a farewell address of matchless tenderness and power (John 14 to 16), showing how they must believe in him, and bear fruit for him, and let the Holy Spirit teach them, and be helpful to each other. He had apparently started out of the upper room when he stopped and prayed the intercessory prayer (John 17) for himself, for the apostles, and for all believers in the future. So he went on to Gethsemane to find strength in further fellowship with the Father.

## THE STRUGGLE IN THE GARDEN

Gethsemane had become precious to Christ as the one place around Jerusalem where he could go at night and talk with his Father, who alone fully understood him. The man who has his place of prayer has a refuge in the time of storm. So Jesus left eight of his disciples near the entrance of the garden, and three others (Peter, James, and John) were to watch near-by while he prayed for strength to meet his hour which was now at hand. The real struggle of Jesus was here. He felt the weight of human sin to the full, and instinctively shrank from

the load. But acquiescence with the Father's will instantly followed the instinctive protest. The Father did help the Son as he prayed. But human sympathy failed him. Three times, when Jesus sought it, he found the chosen three asleep. They had become wearied, but it was pitiful to see these men asleep when Jesus thrice turned to them for sympathy and help. Do we today chill his heart by our indifference? But Jesus is ready when Judas comes. He has won the victory over himself. He can now go to Calvary without a murmur.

## THE ARREST

Judas was both traitor and coward, for he came with a band of Roman soldiers to arrest Jesus. He used the kiss of insult as the sign to the soldiers, but Jesus showed his power by causing them all to fall back on the ground. The surrender of Jesus was voluntary, else his death would have had no moral value. He laid down his life of himself and for our sakes. He was the Son of God and the Son of man, and he was free from sin of his own. The arrest all the same was illegal, for there was no warrant for his seizure. So the disciples fled, as Jesus had foretold, as he was led away a prisoner. He would not even let Peter use his sword for him.

## THE JEWISH TRIAL

There was no real reason for the appearance of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, save as a protest against what the Romans had done in taking the power of life and death away from the Sanhedrin, and also as a satisfaction to their pride in condemning Jesus by their own vote as an answer to his arraignment of them. The appearance before Annas was merely out of courtesy to the ex-high priest while the Sanhedrin was gathering. Every step taken was illegal. It was at night. There was no indictment. There was no charge. There were no witnesses. The Sanhedrin was the accuser as well as the judge. It hired false witnesses.

The high priest, when all had failed, put Jesus himself on oath, and took the vote on the confession of Jesus to be the Son of God, the Messiah of Jewish hope. This claim was not blasphemy if it was true. The meeting after dawn to ratify what they had done did not make it legal. Besides, it amounted to nothing, because the Sanhedrin said nothing at all about its condemnation of Jesus in its charges to Pilate. It was a full meeting, but Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were not present. Possibly they were not notified of the meeting. Possibly they refused to recognize its legality.

## PETER'S DENIAL

One wishes that he could cover up the sad story of Peter's three denials of Jesus. They took place during the Jewish trial, and are recorded by all four Gospels, but in different order. There was one hour between the second and the last. One was at the fire and one was at the door. The third was sharpened by the question of a kinsman of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off in the garden. "Did I not see thee in the garden with him?" (John 18 : 26.) That meant that Peter was in danger of arrest. The oaths and the curses to prove that Peter did not even know Jesus drew a look from Jesus through the open door that broke the heart of Peter.

## THE ROMAN TRIAL

The suicide of Judas was merely another black spot in the blackest of days. The charges of the Sanhedrin against Jesus amounted to nothing save the one about his being "Christ the King" (Luke 23 : 2). This might mean rebellion, and Pilate could not ignore it. But he soon satisfied himself that Jesus was a harmless sort of a King, a King of the realm of truth that did not disturb that of Cæsar at all. He evidently regarded Jesus as an enthusiast with no evil intent and sought the release of Jesus. All the expedients of Pilate failed, even Herod sending him back. The alternative of Barabbas likewise fell through. So Pilate reaffirmed the innocence of Jesus, but agreed to his death. The joy of the Sanhedrin knew no bounds, but they excited Pilate's superstitious fear, and the message of Pilate's wife increased it. But the Sanhedrin threatened to tell Cæsar if Pilate refused the death of Jesus. So he yielded, and feebly washed his hands while the Jews called down the blood of Jesus on themselves and their children.

## THE CRUCIFIXION

It is certain that Jesus was not crucified inside the city where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre stands, but outside the north gate, probably on what is now called Gordon's Calvary. He was led out bearing his own cross, till Simon of Cyrene was impressed, and nailed to the cross about nine o'clock in the morning. This was on Friday. Two robbers were crucified, one on each side of him. The Sanhedrin objected to the charge written in Latin, Greek, and Aramaic and hung over the cross of Jesus, but Pilate refused to change it because it did give the ground of the condemnation. The soldiers gambled over the seamless garment of Christ. The crowds, the rabbis, the soldiers, and

even the two robbers jeered at Jesus as he hung on the cross. Jesus prayed for forgiveness for his enemies, welcomed the repentant robber into his kingdom, commended the mother and beloved disciple to each other. The darkness came at noon and lasted till three in the afternoon, the stillness of death everywhere. Then there burst out a cry of desolation, followed by a cry of thirst, the cry of victory, and the cry of resignation. Then he died. The end of all things seemed to have come.

## THE BURIAL

It was Friday afternoon about three o'clock when Jesus died. The next day, beginning at sunset, was the Jewish Sabbath. Hence the three bodies had to come down before sunset. Roman soldiers came to put an end to life. The legs of the two robbers were broken, but Jesus was seen to be already dead. Hence the soldiers simply pierced his left side, whereupon water and blood came forth, as John testifies (John 19 : 34), proof of the humanity of Jesus against the Docetic Gnostics, and proof also that he died literally of a broken heart. It was fitting that two members of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who were secret disciples and men of position and wealth, should now give Jesus decent burial. The faithful women watched the tomb and spent a lonely Sabbath of despair, while the Sanhedrin had the Roman guard put the Roman seal over the tomb to make sure that no one should remove the body of Jesus and claim that he had risen from the dead. No one of the disciples hoped for his resurrection. The kingdom of God had died with the King.

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**Biblical Material:** Mark 11 : 1 to 15 : 47; Matthew 21 : 1 to 27 : 66; Luke 19 : 29 to 23 : 56; John 11 : 55 to 19 : 42. (Robertson, "Harmony of the Gospels," Section 128a-168.)

**Central Thought:** Jesus meeting his hour.

**Lesson:** Bearing one's cross after Jesus.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Show how Jerusalem always treated Jesus.
2. Purpose of Jesus in the triumphal entry.
3. Points at issue between Jesus and the Jerusalem ecclesiastics.
4. Why Judas betrayed Jesus.
5. Illegalities in the trial of Jesus.
6. Why Jesus submitted to death.

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why did Jesus denounce the Pharisees so?
2. Why did the Sadducees help to put Jesus to death?
3. What did Jesus say about his second coming?
4. Why did Pilate agree to the death of Jesus?
5. Where was Jesus buried?

## PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON IV

## THE CULMINATION

It has been charged by some that Jesus was a deeply disappointed man in the outcome at Jerusalem, that he really hoped for a popular uprising that would make him King in place of Cæsar, that he actually looked for supernatural demonstrations after the order of the apocalyptists or that he was a wild enthusiast (eschatologist Schweitzer would say), and that his hopes were all blasted and that he died a broken-hearted man, deluded by his own idealism into imagining himself to be the Jewish Messiah. These theories all grow out of the effort to make Jesus wholly a product of his times, without real deity and without a conception of the kingdom of God different from that of his age. But such a conception of Jesus is not found in the Gospels, not even in Mark nor in the Logia of Jesus, our earliest known documents. Jesus did use apocalyptic language at times, as in Mark 13 and Matthew 24 and 25, but that is not the dominant note in his teaching. The moral and the spiritual element is the chief one. Jesus does have a message for this world and its life. The Gospels show clearly that Jesus had seen the inevitable end with increasing clearness from the start. The breach between Jesus and the ecclesiastics could not be healed. They felt that Jesus had stepped across their path as an interloper, and every contest with him increased their determination to kill him in order to save themselves. The crisis comes at the last Passover. Jesus flung caution to the winds by his defiance of the Sanhedrin, both in the triumphal entry and in the great debate in the temple on Tuesday. But he did it all deliberately, with full knowledge of the outcome. There is no affectation on Christ's part and no rashness. There was profound appreciation of the solemnity of his conduct, and of the full weight of the burden that he was bearing as the sin-offering for the world. He is conscious that the Father is with him and that he is doing

his Father's will, else he could not have carried on to the end. There is compassion for the sinful along with protest against the wrong-doing. Jesus easily outwits his enemies at every turn and reveals their treatment of him in its real heinousness. The Gospels are fullest in the material for the events of the last week. Jesus was born to die for our sins. He came to give his life a ransom for many. That is not merely the interpretation of a later age. It is the view that Jesus held of his own life. The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die. That is Christ's philosophy of his own life. He calls his followers to like heroism. Jesus did die to show us how to be true unto death. But he died for much more than that. He said that his blood was shed for the remission of sin. No theory of the atonement contains all the truth about it nor all of them together. Hence Christianity is Christo-centric, and the heart of the work of Christ is the cross. That is what the love of God for man means. Christ gave himself for us. It is still true that God gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might have everlasting life. That is the good news, the gospel, the message of salvation through Christ. But the end seemed to have come when Jesus was crucified. Then was first the shame of the cross, for Jesus died as a condemned criminal. To the Jews it was a stumbling-block to find the Messiah in such a one. It was foolishness to the Greeks. The disciples were in gloom, and all faith and all hope had vanished. If one wonders at the courage of the two timid disciples like Joseph of Arimathea, who offered his new tomb for the burial of Jesus, and like Nicodemus, who at last took his stand in the open for Christ, for the dead Christ, we may reflect that great emergencies often create courage, as with women in the presence of death.

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# LESSON V

# THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

## THE LENGTH OF CHRIST'S STAY IN THE TOMB

It is curious that people should have trouble on this point when Luke makes it so plain. He says that when Jesus was buried "it was the day of the preparation, and the sabbath drew on" (Luke 23 : 54). The "preparation" day was Friday before Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. The Jewish day of twenty-four hours began at sunset. Jesus died about 3 p. m., and was buried before 6 p. m. The group of women rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment. (Luke 23 : 56.) Late on the Sabbath day, just before sunset, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James (Matt. 28 : 1) made a visit to see the sepulchre, and just after sunset (beginning of the first day of the week) they with Salome bought spices to anoint the body of Jesus when day came. (Mark 16 : 1.) At early dawn (sunrise), on the first day of the week, they went again to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus (Mark 16 : 2; Luke 24 : 1), and found the tomb empty. There is no way to get rid of this piece of chronology without showing that Luke is mistaken. He records the burial of Jesus on Friday afternoon and the empty tomb early Sunday morning. Jesus was already risen when the women came Sunday morning. Jesus had repeatedly predicted that he would rise from the dead on the third day, and this he had done. A few times he had said that he would rise after three days. If that is taken literally, it must mean on the fourth day, not on the third. The phrase "after three days" can be interpreted freely as it is common enough in all languages, and so it will be in perfect harmony with the facts.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the resurrection of Jesus. He predicted it many times, and gave it as proof of his claims to be the Son of God. If in fact Jesus did not rise from the dead, we are without this proof of his claims. We are also face to face with the problem of the revival of hope in the despairing disciples. It is not enough to say that Christianity revived, because the disciples came to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. Why did they believe this? No modern theory can answer that question satisfactorily that denies the

fact of the resurrection of Jesus. The swoon or trance theory fails to account for the sudden disappearance of Jesus. The view that it is all due to the nervous hysteria of excited women is disproved by the evident fact that the apostles disbelieved the reports of the women till they had themselves seen the risen Christ. The view that it was merely a psychic creation in the minds of the disciples falls down because nobody was looking for the resurrection of Jesus. The view that the spirit of Jesus is alive, while his body remained in the tomb, fails to account for the empty tomb and makes the Gospels misrepresent the facts. The apostles believed and preached unfalteringly the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. Paul was converted to faith by seeing the risen Christ, and preached that fact as proof that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah of hope. It is not possible to have a gospel of hope without the resurrection of Jesus. It is the corner-stone in the structure. Without a real incarnation and a real resurrection Christianity has nothing to stand on and nothing to offer to the world.

## THE PROOF

Westcott says that it is the best attested fact of history. But it is a supernatural fact. But if God exists, and if Jesus Christ is his Son, and did come into humanity, and did die for our sins, and did live a sinless life, and did claim that he would rise on the third day, why is it to be considered impossible if God raised his Son from the dead? The incarnation itself is the supreme miracle. The way to prove the resurrection of Jesus is to start with the power of Christ today in the lives of men. Then comes the power of Christianity through the ages. Then there is the conversion of Paul. In his own epistles he repeatedly tells the story of seeing the risen Christ. Paul was the chief intellectual opponent of Christianity. Something turned him round, and all at once. He says that it was the risen Christ, and he never doubted it. The witness of the four Gospels confirms what Paul says. The Gospels do not agree in all details. They are independent witnesses to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. Nothing else has ever explained the renewal of faith and hope in those who had lost all heart. These men and women are charged with a new power that has swept into it the moral energy of the civilized world. The gospel works. Jesus rose from the dead. He is King today over the hearts of men.

## MARY MAGDALENE

John's Gospel tells about her. She was with the other women when they came early to the tomb, but she did not stay when

she saw the empty tomb. She hastened to tell Peter and John, for Peter was back again with the sorrowing disciples. It was a man's task, for Mary felt that the tomb had been robbed and the body of Jesus taken away. This had been their fear. Peter and John ran a race to the tomb and found it empty, as Mary had said, but John noticed the arrangement of the linen cloths and the napkin, and believed that Jesus had risen from the dead (John 20 : 8), though he could not prove it. They left the tomb and Mary came. The tomb was still empty, save two angels to whom she unbosomed her heart. "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" (John 20 : 13). Mary was wrong in this fear. She turned and thought that she saw the gardener, and suspected that he had removed the body of Jesus. She was wrong also about that. She was face to face with the risen Christ, the first to look upon him. The first words were very simple, as was meet at a moment of such solemnity, "Mary," "Rabboni." She was charged with a great commission to the apostles. "I have seen the Lord," she said as she gave them Christ's message. Was she right? They disbelieved her. Not even John took her side.

## THE OTHER WOMEN

The synoptic Gospels tell what happened to the other women after Mary Magdalene left them, when she saw the stone rolled away and the empty tomb. The women who remained saw the two angels who were not seen by Peter and John when they came, but who were seen by Mary. It is not clear why only the women saw the angels, who said, "He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said" (Matt. 28 : 6). Curiously enough the women were directed to go and tell the disciples, "and Peter" in particular. "He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you" (Mark 16 : 7), while Luke 24 : 7 says that Jesus told them of this in Galilee. Luke records only the appearance to the other women in Jerusalem (Matt. 28 : 9, 10), and on the mountain in Galilee. John records also appearances in Jerusalem and in Galilee, as does Mark's Gospel. According to Luke 24 : 9-11 this group of women reported what the angels had said, but the apostles regarded it "as idle talk" (comp. also Luke 24 : 23). Even when Jesus met these women and said, "All hail," and received their worship (Matt. 28 : 9, 10), the disciples were still unconvinced. It would take more than the "idle talk" of overwrought women to convince the doubting men who once believed in Jesus as Messiah and King. But completest evidence was soon afforded them, by which the darkest experience of their lives was suddenly banished by radiant and quenchless hope.

## THE STORY OF THE GUARD

Matthew 28 : 11-15 reports that the Roman guard left in charge of the tomb of Jesus told the Jewish rulers "all the things that were come to pass." They had seen the angel come and roll away the stone. "His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men" (Matt. 28 : 4). Whether they also saw the risen Christ it is not clear, but the rulers were not convinced by this story of supernatural phenomena. The rather they offered the guard money to say that the disciples of Jesus came by night and stole his body while they slept, an Irish bull, for in that case they would not know it. But they took the money and said what they were paid to say, while the rulers undertook to protect them in case Pilate heard of it.

## ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS

It is Luke (24 : 13-32) who tells this most beautiful story in all the world. If one had never read it, and came upon it for the first time in the Greek, it is hard to imagine how he could be unmoved by its charm. The companion of Cleopas is unknown. It may have been his wife. At any rate they had spent the day (Sunday) in Jerusalem to learn what they could about the situation. They were now returning to their home in Emmaus, and were talking over with each other their former hopes and their present despair. One must understand that to these two despondent disciples it was a stranger who overtook them and joined in their talk. It is impossible to exaggerate the charm of this narrative. Either Luke is the consummate short story-teller of all time in his inventive and creative genius, or he has told a true narrative as it happened with sheer simplicity. Beyond a doubt there is a master's art in the telling, but the note of reality is too manifest for mere invention. The revelation of Jesus at the evening meal awakened the heart-burnings on the way, as they had listened to the stranger's interpretation of the prophecies in the light of the facts about Jesus. There was nothing to do but to go back to Jerusalem and tell the apostles that the women were right after all, for they had seen Jesus for themselves.

## TO CEPHAS

Jesus had sent a special message to Peter. It is not surprising that he appeared to him. There is nothing whatever told us concerning the details. One can easily imagine the agony of soul that had been Peter's during these terrible days since he had denied his Lord in the hour of trial, and had caught his look of

pitying love as he went out and wept bitterly. Of all men in the world, Peter was the very last who should have acted in this way. And now Jesus had sent him a word of love, and had then appeared to him all alone. We may not try to draw aside the veil from that sacred scene. But we know that this appearance was the turning-point in the proof that Jesus had risen from the tomb, for Peter was a man and one of the leaders among the apostles. Before the two from Emmaus could tell their wondrous story, they were confronted at the door where the company of disciples were assembled because of Peter's testimony, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (Luke 24 : 34). This was proof incontrovertible, and left the company full of faith and joy.

## THE FIRST SUNDAY EVENING

John observes that the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. (John 20 : 19.) The sudden appearance of Jesus threw them all into fright and doubt. They supposed that they beheld a spirit (Luke 24 : 37), and had to be convinced that it was really Jesus. So Jesus said: "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye behold me having" (Luke 24 : 39). This of itself raises a problem of its own concerning the body of Jesus in the risen state. He was in a transition state, and did not have a body such as we shall have in the resurrection. To prove that he had the same identical body, he ate a piece of broiled fish. Hence it was not a mere apparition that the disciples saw. Nothing but the bodily resurrection of Jesus will satisfy this narrative. No vision of the spirit of Jesus apart from his body will fit this narrative. The disciples still disbelieved for joy and wonder (Luke 24 : 41) when Jesus bestowed the Holy Spirit on them as an earnest of Pentecost. (John 20 : 22.) It so happened that Thomas was absent on this momentous evening when Jesus came. (John 20 : 24, 25.) The disciples tried to convince Thomas that they had really seen Jesus, but failed completely. Thomas remained exactly where the rest had been when he saw them last. The skeptics about the resurrection of Jesus were the disciples themselves. Thomas demanded for himself the same evidence of the senses that they claimed to have had. (John 20 : 25.) It was plain that the disciples were not in a position to win converts to the faith.

## THE SECOND SUNDAY EVENING

Somehow the disciples persuaded Thomas to meet with them on the next Sunday evening. They had no promise that Jesus

would appear to them again, but they wanted to meet again, and they wanted Thomas present. It is always a problem how to get those of a skeptical turn of mind to face things squarely and particularly to come to public worship. But Thomas came. The doors were shut again. Jesus suddenly appeared and challenged Thomas at once to put his hand into his side and to be not faithless, but believing. To the credit of Thomas it must be said that his doubt vanished at once, and he rose to the height of faith when he said, "My Lord and my God" (John 20 : 28). He had come clean in his trust. And yet Jesus reminded him that he had missed the highest form of faith which was reserved for those who believed without seeing. That type of faith is open to us now. Long afterward, and before the Gospel of John was written, Peter (1 Peter 1 : 8) spoke of those not seeing who yet believed; language much like that used by Jesus to Thomas and which Peter heard. But now all the group of Jerusalem disciples were convinced that Jesus had risen.

## BY THE BELOVED LAKE

The seventh appearance of the risen Lord was to the seven fishermen by the Sea of Galilee, whither they had gone while waiting for the appointed meeting on the mountain in Galilee. It was Peter who proposed that they go fishing, which they did and spent all night at it and caught nothing. Four of them had once before had a like experience. (Luke 5 : 1-11.) The beloved disciple is the first to recognize Jesus, and Peter the first to act on the knowledge. The miraculous draught of fishes showed the power of Christ. They all knew that it was the Master who presided at the simple breakfast on the shore. The searching questions put to Simon by Jesus humbled him very much. There had been three denials that other morning by the fire, and three times Jesus probed Peter's heart for any self-confidence that was left. His contrition was sincere and complete. Peter even used the less inclusive word for love in his earnest emphasis upon the reality of his devotion in spite of his conduct. He threw himself upon the pity of Jesus, who freely forgave him and gave him fresh charges for service. Jesus also foretold a martyr's death for him, as he had once boasted that he was ready to undergo. The curiosity of Peter about the fate of the beloved disciple was natural, and the author takes pains to show that Jesus had not said that he would live till the Master's return.

## ON THE MOUNTAIN IN GALILEE

Matthew 28 : 16 only mentions the eleven disciples as going "into Galilee unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed

them." But Paul (1 Cor. 15 : 6) seems to refer to the same event when he says that "he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep." Matthew 28 : 17 seems to imply that more than the eleven apostles were present, for he adds that "some doubted." That could hardly be true any more of the eleven who had now seen the risen Christ several times. Paul wrote First Corinthians somewhere about A. D. 56, not over twenty-five or twenty-six years after the resurrection of Jesus. He pointedly appeals to the fact that most of the five hundred are still alive when he writes. It was on this occasion that Jesus gave the disciples a world program that still challenges the enthusiasm of modern Christians. (Matt. 28 : 18-20.) He speaks like a conqueror, not like one defeated and undone. It is an amazing outlook for one who had no army, no money, no machinery, no popular support. He had only a small band of faithful men and women who had recovered hope, and who are charged with the task of the world conquest. Jesus claims the power of God, and acts like the Son of God that he is. It is sublime optimism, to be sure, but the outcome has justified his claims and his program. It is still an unfinished task, but the hope of the world today lies right along the path of progress here marked out by Jesus.

## TO JAMES

Somewhere during these days, perhaps in Jerusalem, Jesus appeared to his own brother James (1 Cor. 15 : 7) who had not believed in his Messianic claims. That was a bitter thing to Jesus that his own brother did not appreciate him. He was misunderstood in his own home. But this appearance convinced James, who now with Jude takes his stand with the followers of Christ.

## OPENING THE MIND OF THE DISCIPLES

Luke tells us that again in Jerusalem Jesus spoke to the disciples and interpreted the Old Testament passages concerning him. Jesus found Messianic prophecies in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms (Luke 24 : 44-49), even if some modern scholars fail to do so. "Then opened he their mind that they might understand the scriptures." It is necessary to have an open mind as well as an open Bible if we are to get the mind of God. It is not always easy to get the combination. The Bible has often been barred from the people. Tyndale was burnt alive for putting the Bible into English so that the common people could read it. Today many men seal their own minds against the word of God so that it may find no lodgment.

One longs for the power to give the Bible human interest. Jesus charged the disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. This was the promise of the Father—the coming of the Holy Spirit. Once he has come, they can bear witness to Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth.

## ON OLIVET

Jesus led the disciples out to the summit of Olivet. (Luke 24 : 50.) There he blessed them. As he spoke to them he was parted from them. As they were looking, a cloud received him out of their sight. (Acts 1 : 9.) He was gone, but the disciples were jubilant. They worshiped Jesus, and returned to the temple with great joy and gladness. Before they left Olivet, two angels had appeared and had promised that Jesus would return in due time. The disciples were cheered by this promise, as we should be. We are still looking for his coming. But meanwhile we are to push on the program of the risen Christ for the evangelization of the whole world.

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**Biblical Material:** Mark 16 : 1-20; Matthew 28; Luke 24; John 20 and 21. (Robertson's "Harmony of the Gospels," Sections 169 to 184.)

**Central Thought:** The risen Christ's world program.

**Lesson:** Responding to Christ's call.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Give each of the ten appearances of Jesus.
2. Give some of the theories that explain away the resurrection of Jesus and answer them.
3. Show the bearing of Paul's testimony to the resurrection of Jesus.
4. Show what were the claims of Jesus about his resurrection before his death.

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why did Jesus find it so difficult to convince the disciples that he was risen?
2. At what time did Jesus rise from the grave?
3. What proof have we today that Jesus is risen and reigning?

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON V

# THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

If Jesus did not rise from the dead the world is without a gospel and without hope. No praise of Jesus, as the supreme religious genius of the race, can help a world of sinners in need of a Saviour. No compromise of a social gospel of humanity can redeem a man sunk in sin. It is just as well that men get this point clear in their minds. If the early disciples were simply deluded in believing that Jesus rose, when in fact he did not rise, then we are of all men most miserable. We ought to get it clear also in our minds that Christianity had revived and was winning the world before any of the New Testament books were written. The New Testament does not make Christianity one bit more true than it was before Paul wrote his epistles or the Gospels were written. If Christianity was not true when Peter and John and Paul preached it, the New Testament cannot make it so. Jesus either is or is not the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. He either rose from the dead or he did not. Paul was convinced by his own experience in seeing the risen Christ. The skeptical apostles were likewise convinced by seeing the risen Christ themselves. The conviction that Jesus had risen from the dead did not start by hearsay. The men refused to believe what the women said. They doubted that we might believe, as one of the old writers has said. So then the resurrection of Jesus rests on the bed-rock of personal experience. Those who saw him were prejudiced against believing it. It is really a narrow view of God's power to doubt his ability to raise Jesus Christ, his Son, from the grave. Resurrection is not as wonderful as the origin of life. Neither can be explained without God. If there is no God, nothing matters much. If God really exists, nothing is impossible for him, nothing that is not wrong, nothing that is not against his will. Christianity spread by preaching the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. It can never spread by any other preaching. It is only fair to say that modern Christians know that Jesus is risen, because they know his power over their lives. It is a great thing to know the power of Christ's resurrection. It is pitiful to see a preacher or teacher who does not. A dead Christ cannot change the lives of men and women as we see it done every day everywhere. Jesus is risen. That is the glad news which brought the disheartened disciples back to joy and gladness. There are good books in plenty for those who have doubt today about the resurrection of Jesus.

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# LESSON VI

# THE POWER OF PENTECOST

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of this second volume by Luke. Ramsay and Harnack have proven the genuineness of the Lukan authorship, as is shown in my "Luke, the Historian in the Light of Research." The style of the "we" sections is that of the whole book. The author is a companion of Paul, and is also the author of the Gospel of Luke to which he refers. (Acts 1 : 1.) As a matter of fact, both books are dedicated to Theophilus, and the introduction to the Gospel (1 : 1) applies also to the Acts. The author of both was apparently a physician, and Luke is that physician and friend and companion of Paul. (Col. 4 : 14.) The early date of the Acts now seems much more likely, probably A. D. 62, before Paul was set free in Rome. The reason for the abrupt close of Acts 28 : 31 is, therefore, that events had proceeded no further. According to this view, Luke wrote the Acts while in Rome with Paul and the Gospel while in Cæsarea with Paul. It is not clear what the purpose of Luke is in the Acts. Some are urging that Luke lays so much stress on the trials of Paul in Corinth, Jerusalem, and Cæsarea because he wants to prove to the authorities in Rome that Paul has not violated Roman law, because Christianity is in reality the true Judaism as Paul argued in Romans. It is quite possible that Luke did aim to show this point, but it is not necessary to think that he meant to present the book to Theophilus in order that he might use it as a brief before Nero. At any rate, it is clear that Luke does not give a full account of all the work of the apostles or of any one of them. In chapters 1 to 12 Peter is the hero of the book, while in 13 to 28 Paul takes that place. But Luke was not the companion of Peter as he was of Paul for a good deal of the time. But the activities of many others appear in the story—Stephen, Barnabas, Silas, Apollos, Timothy, Aquila, Priscilla, and James. The book carries the story of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. Whether Luke planned a third volume cannot be known.

## WAITING FOR THE PROMISE

Luke links the apostolic history with the life and work of Jesus. The story in Acts carries on the record of what Jesus

began both to do and to teach. (Acts 1 : 1.) Jesus is the real moving spirit in both books. In the Gospel Jesus was on earth in visible flesh. In the Acts the Holy Spirit carries on the work through the disciples of Jesus. But it is the work of Jesus after all. He had told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. That promise was the coming of the Holy Spirit, who was to endue them with power from on high for the world-wide task that had been laid on them. Once they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit they were to go to Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth. They were meanwhile to tarry in Jerusalem. It was to be not many days hence. As a matter of fact, it was ten days that they continued in prayer for the fulfilment of the promise. Jesus ascended forty days after the resurrection. Meanwhile Peter had proposed the choice of a successor of Judas, and Matthias was selected.

## PETER'S INTERPRETATION OF THE EVENTS AT PENTECOST

There was persevering prayer, but no one was precisely prepared for what did happen. There were a hundred and twenty gathered together in the upper room. The brothers of Jesus were there, along with their mother. It was a proud day for Mary. She had gone through the blackness of darkness of the shadow of death. The sound from heaven was sudden, like the rush of wind. On each of them there appeared a tongue like fire. They all began to speak with other tongues than those that they knew. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, as these supernatural phenomena proved. It was the beginning of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The multitude in the city likewise heard the great sound and came together, but were confounded by the many tongues spoken at the same time. There were Jews at the feast from all parts of the world, and these heard some of the Galilean Christians speaking, each in his own language. That was the wonder of it all. It was not jargon, but intelligible speech, only one that the speaker did not understand. At Corinth, where a similar gift of tongues was manifested, there was no such cosmopolitan gathering, and no one would understand a tongue unless an interpreter happened to be present. But in Jerusalem they were all amazed and perplexed. "We hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God" (Acts 2 : 11). Some of them in mockery accused them with being full of new wine. Peter felt that the occasion called for interpretation in order to prevent further misapprehension. So he stood where he could be seen with the Eleven at his side, probably now outside the house, and made a loud plea for attention and got it. Peter addressed the great throng, not just the

hundred and twenty disciples. It was a great opportunity to put the case for Jesus as the Messiah before such a representation of Jews from all over the world. Peter rose to the occasion with great insight and power. He interpreted the apocalyptic symbolism in Joel 2 : 28f. as applying to the events of this day. He charged the Jews with crucifying Jesus, whom God raised from the dead as all the company of believers can testify, in proof of his claim to be the Messiah. Jesus is now at the right hand of God, and the Holy Spirit has come in power in accord with the promise of the Father. (Acts 2 : 33.) "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (2 : 36). The sermon cut the crowd to the quick, and Peter urged instant repentance and faith. About three thousand on that day turned to Christ and were baptized in the pools in Jerusalem. The company of a hundred and twenty had now become three thousand jubilant souls, a mighty host. The new era had now begun. They were ready for the campaign of world evangelization.

## SEIZED BY THE SADDUCEES

But the work swept on in Jerusalem. The new brotherhood had a new fellowship and joyous worship. There were daily additions to the number of believers. Many of the converts were Jews from a distance who remained in Jerusalem, unwilling to tear themselves away from such scenes of grace and glory. Some of the Jerusalem Christians found themselves boycotted by the unbelieving Jews. A financial crisis quickly arose. But it was met by the free offerings of money and property to meet the emergency. As yet there was no formal cleavage between the believers and the Jews. The disciples went to the temple worship as a matter of course. On one of these visits Peter and John healed a lame beggar, whose ecstasy of joy gathered a big crowd in Solomon's porch to whom Peter again spoke with power, and boldly claimed that Jesus was risen from the dead in proof of his claim to Messiahship. It so happened that the priests of the temple, mostly Sadducees, heard Peter's address, and were greatly enraged because Peter "proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4 : 2). The Pharisees taught the resurrection as a doctrine, but Peter and John presented a concrete case in Jesus whom the Sadducees had helped to condemn. So the issue was joined, and Peter and John found themselves in prison. Next day, before the Sanhedrin, Peter showed amazing courage and boldly proclaimed to the rulers that "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, in him doth this man

stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner" (Acts 4 : 10, 11). Peter is at last the rock that Jesus had said he would be. The Sanhedrin were amazed at such boldness, for both Peter and John "were unlearned and ignorant men" (4: 13), fishermen, not schoolmen or ecclesiastics, but they recognized them as followers of Jesus. John had been with Jesus at the trial before the Sanhedrin, and Peter had hung around the fire with the servants and hangers-on. But the Sanhedrin was troubled how to answer Peter's defense, for the healed lame man stood before them. They felt their dilemma, and decided to threaten Peter and John without denying the obvious miracle on the lame man. "And they called them and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (4 : 18). But Peter and John firmly refused to obey such a court order, "For we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard" (4 : 20). Christians should obey law always except when law contravenes one's duty to God. In that case the higher law prevails. Only when a Christian does disobey the law of the state in such a case, he must be ready to pay for his disobedience with his life if need be. Martyrs by many thousands have paid that price for loyalty to Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Baptist preachers in Massachusetts and Virginia have gone to prison for preaching the gospel of Jesus and have refused to desist. At last religious liberty has come to America by reason of the Baptist contention. The Sanhedrin let Peter and John go. They went to the company of the disciples and told their story of peril. They turned to God in prayer for courage and for proof of God's presence and power. It was granted to them. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word with boldness" (Acts 4: 31). The word of God grew in power with the hand of oppression. "Already the number of the men, besides women, was about five thousand" (4 : 4). According to modern church rolls that would make a big membership.

## CHRISTIAN COMMUNISM

Persecution brings rewards if one does not fall a victim to its perils. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts 4 : 32). That simple sentence throws a flood of light on conditions among the Jerusalem Christians and the spirit with which they faced the troublous times. The apostles proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus with added power, and great

grace was upon them all. They were girded with power from on high for the crisis. Meanwhile no one among the disciples lacked for food. It was not actual communism nor theoretical socialism that was practised. As the occasion arose, one after another would voluntarily sell his property, part or all of it, and would bring the price and lay it at the apostles' feet. Then "distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need" (4 : 35). The bulk of them took care of themselves as before the emergency arose. Only the very poor were the recipients of the bounty. But there was no pooling of property interests. There was no compulsion upon anyone. There was some heroic giving, as in the case of Joseph Barnabas (son of consolation, called so probably because of this noble deed), a Levite of Cyprus. He sold a field and laid the money at the feet of the apostles. The generous act brought great praise for Barnabas and created some jealousy. Ananias and Sapphira had property. They wished to get the reputation of Barnabas without the sacrifice made by him. So they sold their property and kept back part of the price, and brought the rest as if it were the whole. Ananias came first and was amazed that the Holy Spirit enlightened Peter to see and to say that Ananias had lied to the Holy Spirit. He did not have to sell it nor did he have to give it all. His sin was in lying to God. One must keep that fact in mind if he is disposed to think the punishment severe. He wanted credit for more than he did, as happens today, alas, and he was willing to act a lie to God to get that undue credit with men. The fate of his wife followed fast on that of Ananias. The effect was good on the whole. It sifted the crowd of mere hangers-on, "rice Christians" as the Chinese say. "But of the rest durst no man join himself to them." It was a dangerous thing to profess Christianity if one was not prepared to pay the price and be sincere. But on the whole, "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (5 : 14). The sifting process did good, and won real converts to take the place of the cowards and the hypocrites. One need not be upset by those who had faith in Peter's shadow. God honors weak and ignorant faith, for which we may be thankful.

## GAMALIEL TO THE RESCUE

The Sadducees were indignant at the continued growth of the Christians in spite of their repressive measures. They were filled with jealousy Luke says (Acts 5 : 17), and so put the apostles in public ward against the morrow. But that night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and bade the apostles to go to the temple and teach in defiance of the Sanhedrin. Next morning the Sanhedrin met to try the apostles, but could not

find them in prison. The chief priests (Sadducees) were perplexed whereunto this thing would grow. (5 : 24.) They had more reason for their anxiety than they knew. Sadduceeism has long since been dead, while Christianity is the hope of the world. When the Sanhedrin were told that the apostles were boldly teaching the risen Jesus in the temple, they had them arrested again and arraigned at once. But Peter was bolder than ever. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree" (5 : 30). The Sadducees were cut to the heart, and wanted to slay him then and there for his insolence. But Gamaliel, head of one of the Pharisaic rabbinical schools, the one of which young Saul was the pride, saw a good chance to score a point against the Sadducees who had led the attack on the apostles for preaching the resurrection of Jesus as a fact. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection as a doctrine, and so had held aloof so far from the persecution of the disciples. In this division in the Sanhedrin lay their safety so far. Gamaliel was by no means a Christian or remarkably fair-minded. He simply made a skilful turn against the Sadducees and advised caution, lest the Sanhedrin be found fighting against God. He reminded them of previous false claimants, like Theudas and Judas of Galilee. Time would soon tell about Jesus. He carried his point, and the apostles escaped death and ceased not to preach Jesus as the Messiah. Gamaliel had helped.

## TROUBLE WITHIN THE FOLD

It was inevitable that sooner or later disagreements among the believers would arise over some matter of life or doctrine. The very success of the gospel in Jerusalem led to embarrassments, as we have seen. In the ministry of Jesus, Galilee was the center of the followers of Christ. After his resurrection he appeared to over five hundred on a mountain in Galilee. Jerusalem had been the center of the Jewish conspiracy against Jesus, and he had met his death there. But now Jerusalem, not Galilee, is the headquarters of Christian activity. The prestige and power of the Sanhedrin are challenged by the great numbers of believers in the city. The needs of many of these believers were met by voluntary offerings. There were apparently many widows among them who would naturally receive special consideration. The Jews in Palestine were called Aramæans because they spoke the Aramaic language. Some spoke Greek also. The Jews outside of Palestine spoke the Greek language, and so were called Hellenists (Grecian Jews). Jealousies arose on the part of the Hellenists, or Grecian Jewish Christians, that the widows in their group were discriminated against in the distribution of the funds by the apostles in favor of the Aramæan

widows. It soon developed into a petty personal quarrel over the widows and money. The apostles showed great wisdom in the way they handled this problem. Seven men were chosen to handle the distribution of this fund, all of them Hellenists, and that ended the trouble. This is probably the beginning of deacons, as they were later called.

## STEPHEN THE PIONEER

Luke makes a significant comment at this point that the number of the disciples increased exceedingly. There was now some organization among them. "And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (6 : 7). The significance of this statement lies in the fact that the priests were Sadducees. It seemed as if the Sadducees had been defeated. But one never knows what turn things may take. One of the seven (deacons) was Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, full also of grace and power. Stephen had caught a vision of the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God, and began to teach in the various synagogues in Jerusalem, particularly in those of the Hellenistic Jews, that God was to be worshiped by all men everywhere and that Jesus was the Saviour of the world. There was nothing new in what Stephen said, for Jesus had said it all before him. But the note struck by Stephen woke up the Pharisees, who had been quiescent, while emphasis had been laid by the apostles on the resurrection of Jesus. The Pharisees had been the first to attack Jesus for this very line that Stephen had emphasized. Only toward the end did the Sadducees join forces with the Pharisees against Jesus, and they finally compassed his death.

Now Stephen had stirred the Pharisees into fresh hostility, and this fact boded ill for the Jerusalem Christians. The very prowess of Stephen, as in the case of Jesus, enraged the Pharisees all the more. "They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake" (6 : 10). It is possible that in the synagogue of the Cilicians Stephen had a debate with young Saul, the pride of Gamaliel. If so, he also went down in defeat. At any rate, Stephen was soon charged with speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God. False witnesses were bribed to make the same charge against Stephen that was made against Jesus. So Stephen stood before the Sanhedrin for preaching the universal appeal of Christianity. He was not technically guilty of what the Pharisees charged, but what he preached did cut the very ground from under Jewish ceremonialism, as the Pharisees rightly saw was true of Jesus. Stephen made a skilful defense, but he explained how in Jewish history and prophecy the worship of God was not confined to one place.

The effect of Stephen's address was electrical as he drove home their guilt as the murderers of Jesus. They literally gnashed on him with their teeth and stoned him to death as his face shone like an angel's while he prayed to Jesus for their forgiveness. And young Saul was consenting to Stephen's death as he held the clothes of the mob that killed him.

## SAUL, THE PERSECUTOR

The disciples buried Stephen, the first martyr for Christ, but Saul suddenly found himself the leader of a spontaneous persecution of the thousands of disciples in Jerusalem. It was like a prairie fire that swept everything before it. The sanctity of homes was invaded, and even women were brought before the Sanhedrin and put to death for the crime of being followers of Jesus. Saul determined to root the pestiferous heresy out of Jerusalem. Many fled, and the new sect broke out in Damascus and in Antioch. Curiously enough Saul did not disturb the apostles in Jerusalem. But his taste of blood grew, and like a warhorse he sniffed the battle from afar. It looked like defeat for Christianity. No one of the apostles was able to turn the tide against Saul, and Stephen was dead.

## PHILIP THE EVANGELIST

Luke turns a side-light on another one of the seven (deacons)—Philip, who, undeterred by the fate of Stephen, took to preaching himself among the Samaritans. He was applying the universalism of Stephen, and God signally blessed his labors. Peter and John came down to investigate the work, and Simon Magus stands out as a specimen of Oriental chicanery and superstition. The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch was also in line with the evangelistic fervor of Philip. The gospel was spreading outside of the narrow confines of Judaism.

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**Biblical Material:** Acts 1 to 8.

**Central Thought:** Endued with the Holy Spirit for service.

**Lesson:** Courage from contact with Christ.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. The meaning of the events at the great Pentecost.
2. Why did the Sadducees oppose the apostles?
3. What did Stephen do to arouse the Pharisees?
4. The dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The gift of tongues.
2. The conduct of Gamaliel.
3. The attitude of young Saul.

## PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON VI

## THE POWER OF PENTECOST

The Acts of the Apostles raises in an acute form all the problems of New Testament criticism. It was not long ago the fashion for German critics, followed by others, to discredit the book as a second-century apologetic, or even romance, written for the purpose of smoothing out the trouble between Peter and Paul and without historical value. The slow and patient work of Sir W. M. Ramsay, seconded by Adolph von Harnack, has borne fruit. Luke has again come into his own with most modern scholars. His work has been confirmed by every archeological discovery. Statements of his that long stood alone have been set beyond controversy. The papyri in Egypt show that there was a periodical census begun by Augustus and repeated every fourteen years. Inscriptions in Italy and Asia Minor prove that Quirinius was twice in Syria. Tablets in Thessalonica give the strange word "politarchs." A coin in Cyprus has Sergius Paulus as proconsul. It is a fascinating story, and has made it impossible to discredit Luke on the points still unconfirmed. Luke alone tells the beginnings of Christianity from the birth of the Baptist to the arrival of Paul in Rome. It is fortunate that one so well qualified for the task put his hand to it. He reveals rare literary skill and historic insight, and presents the facts with consummate art and power. Those who scout the supernatural label him as credulous because, physician and scientist though he was, he yet records miracles without protest both in the Gospel and Acts. But surely the calm recital of such events by such a man demands respectful consideration even by the skeptical. Luke may be less credulous than they are skeptical. The first part of Acts is attacked today more than any other portion on the plea that Luke was not a personal witness of the great Pentecost experiences as he was when with Paul in the later history. But Luke had abundant opportunity for conference with Philip the evangelist at Cæsarea, with James the brother of Jesus in Jerusalem,

with John Mark in Rome, with Peter and others of the apostles, possibly with Mary the mother of Jesus. It is quite gratuitous to assume that Luke had no historical basis for the great Pentecost narrative. His explanation about the use of sources in Luke 1 : 1-4 applies to the Acts as truly as to the Gospel. It is even argued by some that Luke had an Aramaic document at his disposal for the first half of Acts. He may very well have had several such documents with notes and data that he used besides personal interviews with those present during those great days. The Christian today has everything to lose and nothing to gain by shying away at the great fact of the incarnation of Christ, including the virgin birth and the resurrection, and by explaining away the coming of the Holy Spirit at the great Pentecost. These are real fundamentals that lie at the root of historical Christianity. If Jesus is only a man and did not rise from the dead, and if the Holy Spirit did not come in power at Pentecost, then Christianity rests upon historical delusions, pretty legends, without basis in fact. They did recover their faith, but they won back faith slowly in the risen Christ by incontrovertible proof. Even so they lacked insight and power after faith and hope were restored. It was a revolution at Pentecost, the mightiest spiritual revolution of all time, when Peter stood up as the interpreter of the new order of events. But the very essence of the narrative is that the events came before the interpretation. We are still under the spell and the power of this new dispensation of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to take the things of Christ and to make them ours. This impetus will last till Jesus comes again.

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# LESSON VII

# OPENING THE DOOR TO THE GENTILES

## SAUL'S PLANS

The picture of young Saul in Acts 9 : 1-3 is that of the conqueror. He had driven Christianity out of Jerusalem save what was under cover. He had done what the Sadducees failed to do. He was the hero of Pharisaism for the moment. He had come to this place of power by native gifts and steady application, and by opportune leadership in the crisis. He had a long Pharisaic lineage, and had shown his zeal as a student under Gamaliel by surpassing his fellow students. He had the advantage of Greek culture in Tarsus, probably with some work in the university. There was no one among the apostles the equal of Saul in intellectual power and in training. He was skilled in all the rabbinical methods of argument. He was more aggressive than Gamaliel, his great teacher, in his opposition to Christianity. He stood in well with the Sanhedrin, of which he was probably a member. He had secured papers from the Sanhedrin for the arrest of any Jewish Christians to be found in Damascus. Saul was full of the persecutor's spirit as he breathed out threatening and slaughter toward disciples of Jesus. Vengeance was his very breath, and he was victor. It did look as if the new heresy had been crushed out.

## SAUL'S SURRENDER

We are fortunate in having three reports of the conversion of Saul, which is one of the pillars of proof for the supernatural origin of Christianity. Luke gives the historical narrative in Acts 9 : 3-19. In 22 : 1-21 he reports Paul's speech to the mob from the steps of the Tower of Antonia, in Jerusalem, in which Paul defends his change from Judaism to Christianity. Again in chapter 26 Paul's speech before Agrippa recounts in masterly outline the salient points in his conversion. In broad outline the three accounts agree with some minor variations of detail. In his epistles Paul repeatedly refers to his seeing the risen Christ. Many theories have been advanced to explain away the plain meaning of Paul's language and of Luke's narrative, but they all break down. Paul was too much opposed to Christ to be open to ordinary argument. He was prejudiced against

Christ, and had no motive for a change of front. There is absolutely no sign of mental aberration or nervous collapse in his conduct or writings. His epistles reveal a man of transcendent genius and of great intellectual grasp. He never doubted the reality of his vision of Christ. This fact altered the entire course of his career, and he did not falter for a moment thereafter. The chief opponent of Christ became the chief champion of Christ. He had everything to lose and nothing to gain, from a worldly point of view, by the change, as he himself explained later in Philippians 3. The values in life were all changed that day for Saul. The fact of the supernatural confronts us again as it did Saul, but no biologist is ready in the light of modern knowledge to say what God can and what he can not do. Life is itself the standing wonder and mystery. The living Lord Jesus appeared suddenly to Saul in broad daylight, and Saul surrendered to him. It is true that he had before had passing doubts as he saw Stephen die and the glory on the face of the women who stood true to Christ till death. The challenge of Jesus brought all this to a sharp issue. He surrendered on the spot to Jesus as Lord and Christ. He knew full well what the change meant for him in suffering and in alienation of old friends. The blinding of the eyes gave more time for inward reflection on what had happened to him. In Damascus the Christians were still afraid of the wolf who had ravined the fold. It required a vision for Ananias to be willing to go to see Saul at the house of Judas. One would think that Saul would be the man of all men to bring the Jews to Christ. But Jesus had a harder task than that for him. He was to be his chosen vessel to go far hence to the Gentile world and to win the Roman Empire to Christ. But it was a new strange world in which Saul found himself.

## SAUL'S EARLY MINISTRY

It is noteworthy that "straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9 : 20). Saul knew that the Jews in Damascus understood why he had come. He was anxious to set them straight, now that he had taken his stand for Christ. His change of front created amazement and even consternation. The Jews resented his new alignment. The disciples distrusted the sudden convert. He did not know much Christian theology, but he knew the foundation of it all, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the Messiah of Jewish hope and promise. So he confined his testimony to this great fact, and this truth was the corner-stone of the Pauline theology as he grew in his knowledge of Christ. He never got away from Jesus Christ as the corner-stone. It is not clear

whether Saul had ever seen Jesus in the flesh or not. He may have come in contact with him. At any rate he had openly taken the side of the Sanhedrin, and had justified their conduct in putting Jesus to death as well as Stephen and the other martyrs to the faith. Now his theology had all tumbled down around him. He needed a time for readjustment that he might see clearly what he had left of his old Pharisaic theology, some of which was of course true. But Christ, the risen Christ, was now master for Paul. He must dominate his thinking. Every thought must be brought into captivity to Christ. Saul tells us himself (Gal. 1 : 17) that he went away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Where he went we do not know. It may have been to Sinai, where in the environment of law he could think out the problems of grace. But he returned to Damascus with clarified vision and added power, so that he "confounded the Jews that dwelt in Damascus, proving that this is the Christ" (Acts 9 : 22). He did it so powerfully that the Jews took counsel to kill him. One night the disciples let Saul down in a basket through the wall and he left Damascus in unceremonious fashion. He went to Jerusalem, but not to the Sanhedrin. He was now taboo with Gamaliel and all his old friends. He endeavored to get in touch with the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. (Acts 9 : 26.) In this emergency Barnabas took him aside and listened to his story and believed it and vouched for the genuineness of the change in him. It was a noble act in Barnabas who, humanly speaking, saved Saul for Christian service. With this indorsement Saul found ready access to the disciples and two weeks of delightful fellowship with Simon Peter. (Gal. 1 : 18.) The other apostles were apparently out of the city. Saul now found himself in some of the very synagogues where he heard and opposed Stephen, only now he was the successor of Stephen. "If Stephen had not prayed, Paul had not preached." Saul was even ready to meet the fate of Stephen as only his just due, but Jesus had other work for him and urged him to leave. So he went to Tarsus, and one can only imagine the reception that he met from his home circle now that he had gone over to Christ.

They had ever looked on him as the successor of Gamaliel. But now he was a follower of the despised Nazarene and a renegade Pharisee. Saul was not idle in Cilicia while he waited for further leading.

## PETER'S READJUSTMENT

The chronology of Acts 10 and 11 is not plain. It is not clear whether the story of Peter's activity at Lydda, Joppa, and Cæsarea follows the return of Saul to Tarsus from Jerusalem.

On the whole that is likely, for, now that Saul was converted, "the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace" (Acts 9 : 31). The reason for the escape of the apostles from the Pharisaic persecution is not easy to find. Perhaps the frequent escape of Peter from prison made them immune. One would be reluctant to think that the apostles were quiet from excess of caution. At any rate, Peter is active now and outside of Jerusalem. It seems to us that the apostles remained in Jerusalem too long before going on with the commission of Jesus. The work in Jerusalem had grown by leaps and bounds, but the gospel was not to be confined to Jerusalem. When Philip carried the good news to Samaria (Acts 8), Peter and John were sent down to investigate this unusual procedure, though Jesus himself had preached in Samaria. (John 4.) But Peter and John had no fault to find with the work of Philip in Samaria. At Lydda and in Joppa Peter was apparently working only among the Jews, but in Cæsarea was another story. The reluctance of Peter on the housetop in Joppa to accept the Lord's invitation in the vision to go beyond the Mosaic food regulations shows how strict a Jew Peter was. He evidently up till now expected that the Gentiles who became Christians would also become Jews, as the latter insisted. (Acts 15.) But God was preparing the way for the Gentiles to come in without their becoming Jews. Cornelius at Cæsarea, the devout Roman centurion and God-fearer, was himself prepared by vision for the coming of Peter, just as Peter was gotten ready to go to him. Even so it required an express command for Peter from the Holy Spirit before he was willing to go with them. As precaution he took along with him six Jewish Christians, whose testimony he was glad to have later. In the house of Cornelius Peter bluntly said that he had violated Jewish customs in entering a Gentile's home. (Acts 10 : 28.) Inside of the house Peter saw a new truth—that God was willing to accept Gentiles without their becoming Jews. (10 : 34.) He had crossed the Rubicon, and now boldly preached the gospel of grace to this Roman household just as if they had been Jews. The outcome was amazing all round. Peter gave a résumé of the life and work of Jesus (10 : 36-43) that corresponds in broad outline with Mark's Gospel. But before he had finished, the Holy Spirit fell on the Romans, who spoke with tongues as the Jewish believers did at the great Pentecost. The six Jewish Christians, "they of the circumcision," that came with Peter were amazed, "that on the Gentiles also was poured out the Holy Spirit" (10 : 45). The gift of the Holy Spirit was proof that these Gentiles were converted and were ready for baptism. So Peter had them baptized by the six Jewish believers, and they all returned to Jerusalem. It was a great experience, and it had changed Peter's

view that Gentiles had to become Jews in order to be saved. But news of the conduct of Peter reached Jerusalem before he did. He found himself arraigned before the church in Jerusalem, not on the ground of preaching to the Gentiles, but of going into the house of uncircumcised men and eating with them. (11 : 3.) The charge was the outburst of Jewish ceremonialism, still strong among these Jewish Christians. Before his experience in Cæsarea Peter himself probably felt the same way. There was nothing left for Peter to do but to tell the whole story of God's dealing with him in Joppa and in Cæsarea. It was plain that it was not Peter's dereliction. If anyone was responsible it was God, as Peter showed and as the six Jewish brethren confirmed. So the party of the circumcision in Jerusalem became quiet and even "glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life" (11 : 18). But it was an inflammable issue, as was plain, the conversion of the Gentiles.

## THE OUTBREAK AT ANTIOCH

There was another spontaneous combustion, this time at Antioch in Syria. The persecution by Saul had scattered some of the Christians as far as Phœnicia and Cyprus and Antioch. (Acts 11 : 19.) Some of them were originally from Cyprus and from Cyrene in North Africa. Hellenistic Jews, therefore, like Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, and Saul. These disciples dared to speak "unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus" (11 : 20). How they came to do it we do not know. But "the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord." News of this new outbreak beyond the bounds of the Jewish race soon reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem. There is no evidence that these Greeks (correct text, and not "Grecian Jews") were God-fearers like Cornelius in Cæsarea. Something had to be done, as even those who had acquiesced in what God had done now saw. So the church wisely sent Barnabas to investigate conditions at Antioch. Peter and John had been sent on a similar mission to Samaria (Acts 8), but Peter was now under suspicion by the party of the circumcision after his conduct in Cæsarea. (11 : 1-3.) A better choice than Barnabas could not have been made. He was a Hellenistic Jew and from Cyprus, whence came some of the men who had done this preaching to Greeks in Antioch. He had the confidence of the church in Jerusalem because of his generous gift, as was shown in his conduct toward Saul there. He had probably heard the story of Peter (Acts 11 : 1-18), about the work of grace in Cæsarea. At any rate he saw that it was the grace of God in Antioch and he was glad, and simply exhorted the Greek Christians to "cleave unto the Lord" with no

suggestion that they had to become Jews. Luke gives a naïve reason, "for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people were added unto the Lord" (11 : 24). Barnabas was one of the great spirits in the apostolic period, as I have sought to show in my "Types of Preachers in the New Testament." He was open to the leading of God's Spirit, and saw at once that the door was opening to the Gentile world. It was a great hour. Barnabas showed his wisdom by not going back to Jerusalem to make a report. Instead of this he went to Tarsus and brought back Saul, who was God's man for the new hour. God always has a man in hiding for every crisis. Saul was already the chosen vessel for the work among the Gentiles. He was the one man of all the world to handle this new situation in Antioch. But Barnabas must be given the credit for being able to see that and for being free from jealousy in doing what he did. The man and the hour met with Saul at Antioch. It was now clear that these followers of Christ were not Jews, and they were no longer mere Greeks or Gentiles. A new name was coined to distinguish them from Gentiles and Jews. They were called Christians, followers of Christ. It was not used at first so much as disciples, believers, saints, but it has stuck. A famine came in the days of the Emperor Claudius (41 : 54), probably about A. D. 44, and there was fresh suffering among the disciples in Jerusalem. So the Greek Christians in Antioch sent by Barnabas and Saul a goodly contribution for the relief of the poor disciples in Jerusalem. It was gladly received, and Barnabas and Saul were not brought before the church for what they had done at Antioch. The contribution had a wholesome effect. Luke notes that it was turned over to the "elders" in Jerusalem, the first mention of this new office (called bishops later), as if the apostles were not in Jerusalem at this time. Paul in Galatians does not mention this visit to Jerusalem, probably for the reason that he did not then see the apostles.

## PERSECUTION IN JERUSALEM BY THE GOVERNMENT

The disciples had passed two severe ecclesiastical persecutions, one by the Sadducees and one by the Pharisees. In both cases the Sanhedrin had carried it on, being about equally divided between the two great parties. But now the state stretches out its hand against believers, as Pilate finally did against Jesus. Herod Agrippa I was king of all Palestine, A. D. 42 to 44. For these few years all of Palestine once more had a Herod as king (under Rome to be sure). Hence he is in Jerusalem. The time of this visit cannot be shown precisely in relation to the visit of Barnabas and Saul at the end of Acts 11. It is quite possi-

ble that the events in Acts 12 took place before the coming of Barnabas and Saul, and before the famine. This would explain the absence of Peter and the other apostles from the city when Barnabas and Saul came. At any rate, Herod wanted to please the Jews whose new king he was, and so he had James the brother of John killed, the first of the two to get his baptism of death, and he put Peter in prison. It looked serious for Peter this time, for the heavy hand of the state was upon him. Christianity has suffered much, Baptists in particular, from the state. Separation of Church and State is the Baptist contribution to government. But an angel of the Lord rescued Peter, as he had done before. The church was in prayer at the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark. They were unable to believe the maid's report that Peter was at the gate till they saw him. It was too good to be true. But Peter did not tarry in Jerusalem. The vengeance of God overtook Herod Agrippa I, who died an ignoble death.

## THE FIRST MISSION TOUR

Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch and took along with them John Mark, cousin of Barnabas, who was to play an important part with them and with Peter. It is significant that the Holy Spirit selected Barnabas and Saul, and not one of the twelve apostles, for the great mission campaign. They were both Hellenists, not Aramæan Jews. They had already had experience with the conversion of Greeks in Antioch. They went forth from this Greek church with full approval, which was more than could have been gotten at Jerusalem. Barnabas was at the head of the enterprise. He was the older man and the discoverer of Saul. They took along John Mark as helper. They went first to Cyprus, as was natural, near and the home of Barnabas. At Paphos Saul (called Paul from now on) clashes with Elymas Bar-jesus over Sergius Paulus, the proconsul. It is now Paul and his party. John Mark deserted them at Perga, in Pamphylia, when they crossed over. But Paul and Barnabas pushed on to the up-country. They came to Antioch of Pisidia, where Paul preached a wonderful sermon that Luke has preserved (Acts 13 : 16-43), a fine specimen of Paul's preaching. Paul took advantage of the Jewish synagogues to gain a foothold, and many Gentiles, God-fearers, were present. He succeeded so well that soon they had to leave for Iconium because of the jealousy of the rabbis. Paul turned to the Gentiles, and in Iconium the story was repeated so that they went on to Lystra. Here the Gentiles were ready to worship Paul and Barnabas because a lame man was healed, but Paul dissuaded them. The Jews came here and set the crowd upon Paul so

that he was thought to be dead. But he arose and went on to Derbe. Then Paul and Barnabas returned and strengthened the new churches, and came back to Antioch with a wonderful report that God had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles. (Acts 14 : 27.)

## THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Somewhere about this time, possibly A. D. 48, while Paul and Barnabas were away on the first mission tour, James, brother of Jesus and leading elder in Jerusalem, wrote his epistle to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion, the Jewish Christians now scattered over the world (mainly eastern half of the empire). It is possibly the earliest book of the New Testament and bears a striking resemblance to the Sermon on the Mount. He makes Jesus Christ the object of faith (James 2 : 1), and insists strongly on real righteousness and not empty platitudes. He apparently writes before the Judaizing controversy and does not use the terms faith, justify, works, in the same sense that Paul does in Romans.

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**Biblical Material:** Acts 9 to 14; Epistle of James.

**Central Thought:** The widening horizon.

**Lesson:** Entering the open doors today.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. The conversion of Saul.
2. The work of Philip.
3. The new light to Peter at Cæsarea.
4. The new day in Antioch.
5. The first mission campaign.
6. The Epistle of James.

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why Saul went to Arabia.
2. What Saul preached.
3. How Saul was received in Jerusalem after his conversion.
4. Why Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch.
5. How Barnabas took the leadership of Saul.
6. The case of John Mark.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON VII

# OPENING THE DOOR TO THE GENTILES

The teacher will understand that in dealing with Saul's conversion he has in hand one of the great events in the history of Christianity. There is a double value in it. The career of Paul is the greatest in the history of Christianity, leaving out, of course, Jesus himself. The work of no one man outside of Paul has left such a powerful influence on human history. He interpreted Jesus for the Græco-Roman world in terms that they could understand. Some modern scholars even say that Paul rabbinized the work of Christ, or made a divine Christ out of the man Jesus by applying Greek philosophy, or the Oriental mysticism (cults), to the interpretation of Jesus Christ. The battle is not yet over, but it is clear that these men have grossly misunderstood Paul. He has used Jewish, Greek, and Oriental mystic terms to help men see the riches in Christ Jesus, to know the mystery in Christ. But Paul was not a Judaizer, nor a Mithraist, nor a Stoic, nor a Platonist. He had the keenest of minds, and laid all knowledge at the feet of Jesus; but he enthroned Jesus above all. It is literally true that we must learn Jesus through Paul, for the simple reason that Paul best understood Jesus in his relations to the world of thought and life. The other function served by the conversion of Paul is the historical basis here reached. There is absolutely no doubt whatever that Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans. It is precisely in 1 Corinthians 15 and in Galatians 1 that Paul speaks so specifically about his seeing the risen Christ. One may reply that Paul was mistaken, that he was a neurotic or a paranoiac. The trouble is that his epistles, the ablest in all history, were written after that event. There is no evidence whatever of an abnormal state. Cultured lawyers today read the Epistle to the Romans for its masterful argument as the best specimen of argumentative writing. Paul's own life supports his interpretation of what happened to him. His intellectual sanity, his dynamic energy, his statesmanlike grasp of world problems, his masterful refutation of heresies like those of the Judaizers and Gnostics, his powerful presentation of the person of Christ, mark Paul as the foremost Christian of history. His witness stands unrefuted. He is the chief witness for the resurrection of Jesus. He is the man who carried the gospel over the Roman Empire and took it out of the narrow confines of Judaism. Paul saw that Christianity was a world religion.

He entered the open door, and he was ready to enter it when God showed it to him. Christianity is still struggling with paganism. But now modern civilization is linked with it, and rests upon it, and has grown out of it. In Paul's day the Græco-Roman culture was outside of the gospel and was hostile to it. Rabbinical Judaism and Greek philosophy stood in the path of the cross of Christ. The Jewish rabbi stumbled at the crucified criminal held up to be the Christ. The Greek philosopher counted it foolishness to think of the supreme God as manifest in a man who died on the cross and who was believed to be risen from the dead. It was fortunate that Christ had a follower like Paul who stood head and shoulders above them all, whose loyalty could not be discounted, who had left Judaism for Christianity, who had himself seen the risen Christ.

## LIBRARY REFERENCES

In the eighteenth century two British students, Edward Lyttleton and Gilbert West, decided to overturn Christianity. Lyttleton was to explain away the conversion of Saul and West was to overturn the resurrection of Jesus. Years afterward they met and they had themselves been upset. Their books remain today powerful defenses of Christianity—West's "Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ"; Lyttleton's "Observations on Saul's Conversion."

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# LESSON VIII

# PAUL AT GRIPS WITH THE HEATHEN AND WITH THE JUDAIZERS

## THE PARTY OF THE CIRCUMCISION

It has already been made clear that in the church in Jerusalem the strict element of the disciples (they were all Jews) held that the only way for the Gentiles to become Christians was for them to become Jews. Thus they had understood the Great Commission of Jesus. The quiet assumption was that those far hence who came to Christ must come also to the synagogue. The believers in Jesus at first attended worship in the temple and in the synagogue even after the Sadducees and the Pharisees had persecuted them as heretics. The work of Philip in Samaria had been definitely approved. On Peter's return from Cæsarea he found himself confronted by the party of the circumcision (Acts 11 : 1-3), and was put on the defensive till he was able to show that God had poured out the Holy Spirit on the house of Cornelius much to Peter's own surprise. The work of grace in Cæsarea showed that Greeks as well as Romans responded to the gospel message without becoming Jews. Barnabas and Saul were not arraigned by the party of the circumcision on their visit to Jerusalem with the gifts from the Greek Christians for the poor in the church in Jerusalem. This was a step in advance, and Peter had definitely acquiesced in this program along with Barnabas and Saul. But the great campaign for Gentile converts in Cyprus, Pamphylia, and Galatia (south Galatia, that is, Pisidia, Lycaonia) had changed the whole situation so far as the party of the circumcision was concerned. These Judaizers, Jewish Christians, who insisted that Gentile Christians must observe the Mosaic ceremonial law, were thoroughly alarmed. Already there were as many Gentile Christians as Jewish, if not more. If things went on thus, soon the Gentile Christians would definitely take the lead, and Antioch, not Jerusalem, would shape mission plans and policies.

## THE CHALLENGE AT ANTIOCH

We do not know who the leaders were who made haste to go to Antioch from Jerusalem to tell Paul and Barnabas and their Gentile converts, bluntly, "except ye be circumcised after

the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15 : 1). There was no mistaking this note of protest and defiance. Their acquiescence in the work of Peter in Cæsarea, and of Barnabas and Saul in Antioch, did not contemplate a propaganda for Gentile supremacy. There was now nothing left for Paul and Barnabas to do but to surrender or to fight. Fortunately they did not hesitate a moment, but accepted the gage of battle for Gentile freedom from the Mosaic ceremonialism. Spiritual Christianity was at stake. If the Judaizers had their way, Christianity would be a sect of Pharisaism. Paul and Barnabas saw at once the tremendous import of the issue that was raised. It was the fight of Stephen with the Pharisees over again, only this time with Pharisaic Christians. And now Paul was the exponent, not the opponent, of the ideals of Stephen. It is plain that the church at Antioch, a powerful Greek church, stood with Paul and Barnabas against the demand of the Judaizers. But it was not wise for Antioch to be arrayed against Jerusalem. Hence the appeal to Jerusalem.

## THE CONFERENCE IN JERUSALEM

It was a battle of giants when Paul and Barnabas proceeded to Jerusalem. They had a triumphal march and reception as they told the story of God's grace among the Gentiles. But, as soon as they concluded their recital in Jerusalem, some of the Pharisees in the church pointedly said: "It is needful to circumcise them and to charge them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15 : 5). There is a break in Luke's narrative at this point. He is only telling the public aspects of the discussion, but verse 6 seems to imply an interruption and a fresh gathering of the apostles and the elders to consider this matter. It is highly probable that between these two public gatherings came the private conference of Paul and Barnabas with the big three in Jerusalem—James, Peter, and John. It is denied by some that Paul is referring, in Galatians 2 : 1-10, to the same conference as that described in Acts 15 : 1-29. But Paul is not giving a list of his visits to Jerusalem, but proof of his independence of and equality with the twelve apostles. It was in the private conference called by Paul that he had his opportunity to put the case of Gentile freedom in a way to secure the hearty cooperation of Peter, James, and John. Peter was already involved on Paul's side by his experience in Cæsarea, but the Judaizers had hopes of bringing him and James and John to their side against Paul. Paul had complicated his position a bit by having with him Titus, a Greek Christian, probably of Antioch and probably also a brother of Luke. Some of the compromising brethren insisted at the private conference that Paul should agree to have Titus

circumcised, and then they could pass resolutions for the freedom of the Gentiles from the bondage of the Mosaic law. But Paul saw at once that the whole contention was involved in the case of Titus. So he would not yield for one hour, and in the end James and Peter and John took Paul's view and the compromisers were hopelessly defeated. Paul and Barnabas were recognized as in charge of the work among the Gentiles, while James and Peter and John were leaders in the work among the Jews.

It was a glorious victory. In the open meeting that followed the Judaizers were given full opportunity to air their views. Finally Peter got up and showed how this matter was already settled at Cæsarea by God himself in sending the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his house, and how even those already Jews had to believe in Jesus as Saviour. After another pause Paul and Barnabas told their story afresh. Then came another pause, when James, the brother of Jesus, the leading elder in Jerusalem, and a loyal Jew and president of this conference, took the floor and indorsed what Paul and Peter had said and showed that Amos had foretold the spread of God's kingdom among the Gentiles. Hence James opposed putting a burden on the Gentiles that Jews could not keep, but insisted that the Gentile converts avoid idolatry, fornication, and murder (one text), or things strangled (another text). James offered his resolution and it carried unanimously, the Judaizers evidently not voting. It was a clean-cut victory for Paul and for spiritual Christianity.

## THE EXPLOSION AT ANTIOCH

Sometime after Paul's victory in Jerusalem Peter was in Antioch in full accord with the freedom of the Gentiles and ate with the Gentiles. (Gal. 2 : 12.) The problem of social relations with the Gentiles had not come up in the Jerusalem conference, though that was the issue raised after Peter's return from Cæsarea. (Acts 11 : 1-3.) Paul and Barnabas evidently had been acting on the basis of social equality in their work with the Gentiles. No trouble had arisen on this point outside of Jerusalem; but for some reason some of the Judaizers from Jerusalem turned up again in Antioch and made formal protest against Peter's conduct as going beyond the Jerusalem agreement. They gave it out they had been sent by James to investigate the conduct of Peter, and threatened to report to James what Peter was doing. Paul does say that they "came from James" (Gal. 2 : 12), but does not at all mean that James approved what they did. But Peter gave in to their demand, "fearing them that were of the circumcision." It was cowardice on his part, like that of his denial of Christ at the trial of Jesus.

But the thing did not stop there, for all the Jewish Christians fell in line with Peter's dissembling, "and even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation." Hypocrisy is the word used by Paul when he resisted Peter to the face. Paul stood alone, for the moment, in his contention for Gentile freedom. But his stern rebuke of Peter brought him back to cooperation and cut him loose from fear of the Judaizers. Barnabas followed suit, and there was harmony once more. But it was a real crisis. Weakness on Paul's part would have brought disaster. His courage saved the day.

## THE BREACH WITH BARNABAS

Peter left Antioch and went on his way and to his work of evangelization of the Jews. Paul grew restless and eager to go back to south Galatia to see how the new churches there were doing. So he proposed to Barnabas that they return to the old haunts. The thing appealed to Barnabas, only he suggested that they take along John Mark. But Paul was utterly unwilling to take again Mark who had deserted at Perga. Paul held his ground and would not agree to the plea of Barnabas, who was much concerned that Mark should have a second chance. One's heart goes with Barnabas, and rejoices that Barnabas was such a friend of the young preacher. But one's head goes with Paul who was not willing to risk the work with a man who had flickered in a crisis. So Barnabas took Mark in hand and left Paul for Cyprus. There was sharp feeling over the matter as was inevitable. Luke follows the story of Paul, and Barnabas drops out of Acts. We know that Mark did make good and was useful to Peter and finally to Paul, as has been shown in my "Making Good in the Ministry." Paul took Silas in the place of Barnabas, and they started out through Syria and Cilicia for Galatia, with the approval of the church in Antioch. (Acts 15 : 36-41.)

## THE SECOND MISSION TOUR

Paul started upon the second tour with mingled feelings of disappointment and hope. He owed much to Barnabas, but henceforth their paths would be apart. Paul took along the decrees of the Jerusalem conference for the comfort of the Gentile Christians and for their protection against Judaizers. Luke does not give a full account of all that occurred, but he touches the high points. Paul picked up Timothy at Lystra and Luke at Troas, where he received the Macedonian call. These two friends were loyal to Paul to the very last. Luke evidently had points of contact with Philippi where Paul touched Europe for the first time. The response of Lydia and her group of mer-

chant women seemed a poor beginning for the conquest of Europe, but this church was the first to lend the hand of financial help to Paul's missionary campaign. Paul went up against the greed of the masters of the poor girl whom he freed from her infirmity. Women and children are still exploited for money by modern grafters and profiteers. But prison bars flew open for Paul and Silas, who found in Thessalonica a much more ready reception for the gospel. Paul soon aroused the jealousy of the Jewish rabbis in Thessalonica, as he had made the girl's masters patriotic for revenue in Philippi. It is plain that Paul proclaimed the kingdom of God in Thessalonica in contrast to the kingdom of Cæsar; but he preached Christ as spiritual King, not as political ruler. His words were turned against him by the rabbis and the rabble in conjunction. Paul was misunderstood also in Thessalonica by some of the disciples, who grew so excited that they said that Christ was coming right away and hence it was not necessary to work. So Paul and Silas left Thessalonica to relieve Jason, their host, of responsibility. At Berœa the same story of jealousy was repeated, but the people searched the Scriptures diligently for proof of the new doctrines. Paul had to flee to Athens, whence he sent word for Timothy to come to him.

Paul was not idle in this intellectual center of the world, full of philosophical speculation and idolatry. So Paul's spirit wrestled with Jews in the synagogues and the Greeks in the agora and the Areopagus. The atmosphere was uncongenial to faith in the risen Christ, as is true today in some educational centers. But Paul bore his brave and clear witness and had some success, though nothing like that in Thessalonica. In Corinth Paul found a home with Aquila and Priscilla, who were tent-makers like him. The coming of Timothy and Silas here cheered his heart, and the gifts and supplies released him from work on tents for preaching. There was a great increase of interest that led to his expulsion from the synagogue as a base of operations. But he had even greater results in the house next door.

It was in Corinth that the Jews arraigned Paul before Gallio, the new proconsul, with the result that Christianity was declared legal as a mere variety of Judaism. But Paul wrote two letters to Thessalonica while in Corinth, about A. D. 50 or 51. These are the earliest of his epistles preserved to us and correct misconception of Paul's teaching concerning the second coming of Jesus. Paul believed it and preached, but the time was unknown. Paul and Aquila and Priscilla left for Ephesus and Paul went on to Cæsarea, probably Jerusalem, and then to Antioch, whence he had started on this wide tour that had carried the gospel to Europe.

## THE WORK AT EPHESUS

Paul remained about three years in Ephesus after starting on the third mission tour from Antioch, A. D. 52 to 56, or 53 to 57. On the second tour he was debarred by the Holy Spirit from coming to Ephesus, but now he is here. He had been preceded by Apollos, a brilliant young disciple from Alexandria, who knew only the teaching of John the Baptist, but who preached accurately what he did know. Priscilla and Aquila instructed him more accurately, and sent him on to Corinth to carry on the work begun there by Paul. On Paul's arrival at Ephesus he found a group of ill-informed disciples of the Baptist who were apparently without connection with Apollos. Paul's work in Ephesus soon led to a breach with the synagogue, so that he made his headquarters in the school of Tyrannus. From Ephesus the message of Paul reached the whole province of Asia, and a circle of churches grew in the five towns of this flourishing region. Paul wrought miracles of healing, and the superstitious faith of some about handkerchiefs was honored of God. The case of the seven sons of Sceva throws light on the traveling Jewish sorcerers of the period. (Compare Simon Magus in Samaria and Elymas Bar-jesus in Paphos.) The burning of the books of magic in Ephesus is a fine use for many modern books of slush and filth. Paul's plans for the evangelization of the Roman Empire come into view here. He means to go to Macedonia, to Achaia, to Jerusalem, to Rome, and even to Spain. Trouble had arisen over the work of Apollos in Corinth through no fault of his. There were dissensions, immoralities, disorders, and what not. He sent Timothy to Corinth to see what he could do with the four factions—a Paul party, an Apollos party, a Cephas party, and even a Christ party. The family of Chloe brought news to Paul. He wrote them a letter now lost. (1 Cor. 5 : 9.) They wrote a letter to Paul and sent a delegation to Paul. Paul wrote what we call First Corinthians and discussed at length all the varied problems, and made a plea for loyalty to Christ in place of factional strife, for purity of life, for orderly conduct and loving consideration of each other, about meats offered to idols and the exercise of spiritual gifts, for fidelity to the doctrine of the resurrection and their share in the collection for the poor in Jerusalem. He was planning to stay till Pentecost, and had sent Titus to Corinth, since the return of Timothy, and was expecting to meet Titus at Troas. Timothy and Erastus had gone on to Macedonia. But the uproar caused by Demetrius and his craftsmen, whose trade was injured by Paul's preaching, led to Paul's sudden departure from Ephesus. It was a riot made to order, piety for revenue, union of capital and labor, against loss of trade by preaching. Paul was probably

ill and ran the risk of his life in his eagerness to face this mob, and was only hindered by the influence of the Asiarchs.

## TITUS AND MACEDONIA

With a gloomy heart Paul left Ephesus and reached Troas before Titus came from Corinth via Macedonia. The Judaizers had been busy at Corinth in disturbing the work there. The Gentiles and the Jews had combined against Paul in Ephesus. The clouds hung heavy, and Paul could not be content to wait in Troas though an open door for service was there. So he pushed on to Philippi where he met Titus, who brought the news that the majority of the church had come to Paul's view and support with only a stubborn minority left. So Paul writes another letter, our Second Corinthians (two in one according to some critics), in which he justifies his conduct about Corinth in a noble panegyric on preaching (2 Cor. 2 : 12; 6 : 10; see my "Glory of the Ministry"), and urges the completion of the collection (2 Cor. 8 and 9), and warns the stubborn minority to change their conduct (2 Cor. 10 to 13). Paul sent this powerful personal apologetic by Titus and Luke (apparently) and Erastus. Meanwhile he goes on to Illyricum to wait long enough for the epistle to do its work in Corinth.

## CORINTH ONCE MORE

Finally Paul reaches Corinth and all is lovely once more. The Judaizers had apparently gone and the opposition to Paul has vanished. He spent three months there (Acts 20 : 3), and apparently had everything his own way among the Christians. It is probable that during the winter or early spring of 56 or 57, Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians. There is no way of deciding the precise time when this burning plea for Gentile freedom from Jewish ceremonialism was written. Ramsay now argues that it was very early, about the time of the Jerusalem conference. But there are many difficulties in that view. It is still more likely that the epistle was written shortly before the longer Epistle to the Romans on the same general theme—Justification by Faith. The controversy at Corinth made the issue acute. The agitation of the Judaizers in Galatia kept it alive. So Paul hurls this thunderbolt at the Judaizers there. Phœbe, deaconess of Cenchreæ, was going to Rome and made it easy to send a letter to the church there which would give a digest of Paul's doctrines of grace, and which would prepare the way for his coming. He had never been to Rome, and to this fact we owe the rather comprehensive discussion of the God-kind of righteousness in the Epistle to the Romans, Paul's

masterpiece and a treasure for all time. It was probably in the spring of 56 or 57 when he wrote it.

## ON TO JERUSALEM FOR THE LAST TIME

Paul was now ready to take the money to Jerusalem, and he started with the committee of the churches from the provinces of Achaia, Asia, Galatia, Macedonia. It was an eventful journey and voyage. At Philippi he picked up Luke again, who was with him to the end. Here he spent the Passover week. There were stops at Troas, Assos, Samos, Miletus, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais, Cæsarea. Paul had forebodings of trouble in Jerusalem, and went on against the protests of the brethren. He had some days with Philip the evangelist in Cæsarea. But Paul wanted to prevent a breach between Jewish and Gentile Christians and so pushed on.

## THE OUTBREAK IN JERUSALEM

James had a plan for Paul by which he was to silence the report of the Judaizers that Paul opposed the Mosaic regulations of the Jews. It was Gentile freedom for which Paul fought. It was immaterial what the Jews did. The plan of James was wise, and succeeded with the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and brushed aside the Judaizers. But Paul had other enemies. There were Jews from Ephesus at the Passover in Jerusalem. Paul was accused by them of desecrating the temple while in the very act of worship in it. The riot led to Paul's arrest, and it will be five years before Paul is free again. He is rescued from the mob by Lysias, the Roman chiliarch, who dragged him out of the temple and once again after his speech from the steps of the Tower of Antonia. He is rescued from the Sanhedrin. He is dallied with by Felix and by Festus for over two years in Cæsarea, and finally appeals to Cæsar as the only hope of freedom.

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**Biblical Material:** Acts 15 to 26; 1 and 2 Thessalonians; 1 and 2 Corinthians; Galatians; Romans.

**Central Thought:** Paul winning the Roman Empire to Christ.

**Lesson:** Christ for the world and the world for Christ.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Treatment of Paul and Barnabas by the heathen.
2. Treatment of Paul and Barnabas by the Jews.

3. Attitude of the Judaizers in Jerusalem to Paul and Barnabas.
4. Course and outcome of the Jerusalem conference.
5. Breach between Paul and Barnabas.

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. When is religious controversy worth while?
2. Why was Paul opposed in Philippi?
3. Why in Thessalonica and Berœa?
4. Why in Athens?
5. Why in Corinth?
6. Why in Ephesus?
7. Why in Jerusalem?

## PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON VIII

## PAUL AT GRIPS WITH THE HEATHEN AND WITH THE JUDAIZERS

The chronology of Paul's career is full of unsettled points. It used to be said that the death of Herod Agrippa I, A. D. 44, and the coming of Festus after Felix, A. D. 60, gave two fixed points. But the relation of the death of Herod Agrippa I to the famine and the event in Acts 12 is not perfectly clear. It is likely that the visit of Barnabas at the close of chapter 11 came after the events in chapter 12. The precise date of the coming of Festus is still in dispute. Possibly A. D. 59 is about as close to it as we can come. But the coming of Gallio as proconsul in Achaia has been pretty well fixed by the discovery of an inscription at Delphi of a technical nature about the year A. D. 50 to 51. So this date moves back a year most of the other dates in Paul's life. The epistles of Paul supplement the story in the Acts in a wonderful way, though absolutely independent. There are thirteen of these epistles, accepting the Pastoral Epistles as genuine. They fall into four groups: 1 and 2 Thessalonians, A. D. 50 to 51; 1 and 2 Corinthians and Galatians and Romans, A. D. 55 to 57; Philippians and Philemon and Colossians and Ephesians, A. D. 61 to 63; the Pastoral Epistles, A. D. 66 to 68. The first group deals chiefly with problems of eschatology, the second with justification by faith in answer to the Judaizers, the third with Christology in answer to the Gnostics, the fourth with ecclesiastical matters. In the second mission tour Paul rises to his full stature as he faces the world-power

of Rome and presents the kingdom of Christ as the hope of the world. He is a supreme missionary statesman and Christian philosopher in his grasp of the world situation and the spiritual issue at stake in his conflict with the Judaizers. Paul's Jewish and Greek training equipped him finely for this supreme task. In interpreting Christ in terms adapted for Jewish and Greek culture, as well as for the masses, he shaped the course of Christian theology for all time. He did not make a Christ out of Jesus, but he enabled men to understand the fulness that is in Christ. Luke's own record is remarkable not alone for its historical accuracy as tested by modern discovery, but for his true appraisement of Paul as the great interpreter of Christ in spite of the opposition of Jew, Gentile, and Judaizer. The false brethren troubled Paul's spirit more than all the rest. But Paul carried forward the work and held it together. He was the great unifying force between Jewish and Gentile churches. He taught the churches how to cooperate by the great collection for the poor in Jerusalem. He held them to love and loyalty, made a place for the gospel in the Roman Empire which it was one day to conquer.

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# LESSON IX

# PAUL IN ROME AND THE GNOSTIC HERESY

## WHY PAUL WENT TO ROME

Paul had a set purpose to go to Jerusalem in the face of warnings by the brethren and predictions by the Holy Spirit of coming trouble. He went bound in the spirit from a high sense of duty to the cause of Christ. We have seen how, while silencing the criticism of the Judaizers, he fell into the hands of the Jews and became the victim successively of the mob, the Sanhedrin, and of Roman provincial injustice. In order to escape the clutches of the Roman procurator's greed and of the Sanhedrin's hatred and vengeance, Paul at last appealed to Cæsar as he had a right to do. He was a Roman citizen, and that fact had stood him in good stead in Philippi and in Jerusalem. Festus pretended to Agrippa II that if Paul had not appealed to Cæsar he could have been set free. That was true, but Festus had refused to set him free, and was actually trying to get him in the power of the Sanhedrin again. The appearance of Paul before Agrippa was a mere spectacular entertainment, a mere mock trial, but Paul used it to state his case once more with clearness and power. The chances for release at the hands of Festus were not a bit better than with Felix. Both were afraid of the Jews. It was wholly uncertain what the outcome would be in Rome, but there was at least a chance. Paul had long planned and longed to go to Rome, the center of world-power and influence. After touching the eastern provinces he wanted to preach in Rome, whence radiated influences for good and evil all over the empire. He wished then to go to Spain. Jesus had appeared to him in vision in Jerusalem and had promised that he would go to Rome. So he feels clear as to his path.

## HOW HE WENT TO ROME

But he is not going as he had first planned. He is no longer a freeman, but a prisoner. True, he was a prisoner under a misapprehension. He was guilty of no crime against Jerusalem or Rome. But he was the victim of race prejudice and religious prejudice, a powerful combination. Paul was in the hands of a Roman centurion named Julius, of the Augustan band. He

was taking his regiment back to Rome with a bunch of prisoners to be tried for various offenses. Paul had Luke and Aristarchus to accompany him, possibly as his body servants or slaves as Ramsay has suggested. There was no passenger ship and they started in a wheat ship, going from Alexandria to Adramyttium. Julius was kind to Paul and allowed him to see his friends at Sidon. They set sail possibly early in August, A. D. 59, but a stiff gale from the northwest was blowing that made sailing difficult. Hence the ship slipped under the lee of Cyprus, and then hugged the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia till Myra, a city of Lycia, was reached. Here was found another grain ship of Alexandria that was bound for Rome. So Julius changed his soldiers and prisoners to this ship, and the second ship felt its way with difficulty in the teeth of the wind till Cnidus was reached, where a decision was made to turn southwest under the lee of Crete as the only possible course by reason of the persistent northwest wind. It was not possible to do otherwise, and even this was a dangerous voyage. However, Fair Havens on the Island of Crete was reached, when a council was held as to what to do. It was not a very good harbor and it was now late to attempt to go on to Rome. It was past the day of Atonement (the fast), about the end of September. The only point in dispute was whether to remain in Fair Havens for the winter or to seek a better harbor like that at Phœnix which was more protected from the winter storms. The centurion followed the advice of the master and owner of the ship to find a better harbor. For some reason Paul ventured to advise strongly against it, and predicted loss of the ship and of life if it was attempted. A soft zephyr blew up from the south and they started off, but kept close to the shore of Crete. Suddenly the wind changed and came down from Crete from east northeast, and caught the ship on the starboard side (right side). They would have been driven to the Syrtis or quicksands off Africa. Fortunately the little island of Cauda gave a shelter long enough to haul in the lifeboat, to lower the sails, and to undergird the boat and to turn the boat as near the wind as possible so that the drift would be away from the Syrtis. Then there was nothing to do but to drift. The storm kept on with undiminished fury. They threw overboard part of the freight. On the third day the tackling was cast out. Finally, when all hope was lost, Paul reminded them all that they should have listened to his advice, but spoke of an angel who had appeared to him with the promise of their lives because he must stand before Cæsar, though with the loss of the ship. On the fourteenth night, without chart and compass, the sailors heard a roaring like breakers and soundings showed that they were nearing land. The sailors anchored the ship from the stern and sought to escape in the little boat and leave the

rest to their fate. Again Paul warned the centurion, who made the sailors cut the ropes of the little boat. Paul urged that all eat something to be ready for the swim from the ship. It proved to be the island called Melita (Malta), where the barbarians received them all kindly. Paul was bitten by a snake with no harm and cured the father of Publius, while Luke helped many with medical aid. In the early spring another Alexandrian grain ship (Castor and Pollux), that had spent the winter at Melita, took the party of Julius by Syracuse and Rhegium to Puteoli. So Paul came to Rome along one of the great Roman roads after much tribulation.

## HOW HE WAS RECEIVED IN ROME

Somehow news had come to the disciples in Rome that Paul was coming. He had written them years ago to look out for his coming, but now he is a Roman prisoner. Still, the brethren sent a committee to meet him at the Market of Appius and at The Three Taverns. They were glad to welcome the hero of the cross, who bore branded in his body the marks of Jesus. (Gal. 6 : 17.) He had suffered much for Christ, as he himself records in 2 Corinthians 11. But this was his glory, not his shame. Paul was placed in charge of the chief of the camp, the stratopedarch, and was allowed to have his own hired dwelling though chained to a Roman soldier. Paul was anxious that the Jews of Rome should not be unduly prejudiced against him, since Poppæa, the Jewess, was mistress and finally wife of Nero. So he explained to the Jewish leaders why he was in Rome, and how he had done nothing in dishonor of the temple or of Jewish customs, and why he had appealed to Cæsar, and that his real message was the hope of Israel. It turned out that the Jews in Rome had heard nothing against Paul, but much against Christianity. So Paul set a day and expounded the message of Christ to them at great length. Some few were won, but the majority were repelled. Paul felt anew that his message was to the Gentiles. Paul was allowed freedom to see his friends, many of whom came. Paul kept his interest in the work in the East.

## THE VISIT OF EPAPHRODITUS FROM PHILIPPI

The date of the Epistle to the Philippians probably comes about A. D. 62, probably before the others in the third group—Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians. This church was the first to help Paul in his missionary work, and they were grieved at the affliction that had overtaken him. So they sent Epaphroditus to Rome with a loving message and with gifts that were timely, for Paul's appeal to Rome cost him much in money besides in

time. Unfortunately Epaphroditus fell a victim to the dreaded Roman fever and was near to death. News of his illness reached Philippi and their sorrow saddened him still more. But God spared his life, and Paul sent him back to Philippi because he could not spare Timothy and was not yet able to come himself as he hoped, and as he probably did at a later time. Epaphroditus carried with him the beautiful Epistle to the Philippians, in which Paul explains his condition in Rome and hopes of release, with warm gratitude for their kindness and with prayer for God's blessing on them. This little epistle has the great Christological passage, Philippians 2 : 1-11, in which Paul pictures the preincarnate glory of Jesus, his humiliation and incarnation and greater glory after the resurrection. In chapter 3 Paul reveals his own passionate hunger after fuller knowledge of and likeness to Christ.

## THE CONVERSION OF ONESIMUS

The briefest of all of Paul's epistles is that to Philemon, a man of prominence among the Christians of Colossæ. He had a runaway slave, Onesimus, who had drifted to Rome and had been led to Christ by Paul. The problem with Paul was now what to do with Onesimus. He decided to send him to Philemon, but with a plea for forgiveness and with the offer to pay whatever he had wrongfully taken on leaving. But Paul was not content that Onesimus should be taken back as a mere slave. He asked that he be received as a brother in Christ, with the same heartiness and honor that would be accorded to Paul. He asked that Philemon would do more than Paul asked; that he voluntarily give him his freedom. It is only a page in length, but there is more of the spirit of Christ applied to social problems than whole libraries written today in the fierce conflict between capital and labor.

## THE VISIT OF EPAPHRAS FROM COLOSSÆ

The gospel had spread from Ephesus to Colossæ and Hierapolis and Laodicea, though Paul himself had not visited these cities. In Paul's speech to the elders of Ephesus, at Miletus, he had warned them against grievous wolves that would devour some of them. (Acts 20 : 29.) Epaphras had now come from Colossæ to Rome with the sad news of the arrival of these wolves in the form of teachers of Gnosticism. It was an Oriental cult from Persia, with a dash of Greek philosophy and Essenism, that was disposed to absorb some Christian teaching. These speculative philosophers held that matter was inherently evil and so was not created by the good God, but by one of the intermediate agencies, or æons, who came in between God and matter. These were far enough away from God not to defile him and

yet close enough to have creative power. There were two acute problems about Christianity. One was the Person of Christ. Where did he come in? Was he mere man, wholly God, or one of the æons? The answer of the Gnostics, the knowing ones as they were called, was twofold. The Docetic Gnostics held that Jesus did not have a real human body, but only seemed to have one. He was all spirit, one of the æons who appeared in human form. The other solution was that of Cerinthus, who drew a distinction between the man Jesus, wholly human, and the æon Christ, who came upon Jesus at his baptism and left him at his death. This was the first Jesus or Christ controversy. But both views degraded Christ to the position of æon. This heresy brought to the fore the person of Christ, and Paul wrote the Epistle to the Colossians to give the truth about Jesus Christ, one person as opposed to the Cerinthian Gnostics, and both God and man with a real human body, as opposed to the Docetic Gnostics. Jesus Christ is the Godhead dwelling bodily in the flesh (Col. 2 : 9), the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Col. 1 : 13-16), and supreme in the spiritual realm, head of the spiritual sphere or kingdom of God. (Col. 1 : 17-23.) Colossians presents the dignity of Christ as head of the body, his church. The other problem made acute by Gnosticism was a moral one. The notion that matter is essentially evil led some Gnostics to asceticism, as seen among Buddhists and Roman Catholics, or to license, since the soul is uncontaminated by the deeds of mortal flesh, as seen among some nominal Christians and so-called Christian Scientists. Paul makes a powerful plea for the supremacy of Christ and for the purity of the body with such an exalted head. Paul applies his doctrine of holiness to the life of various social classes. Tychicus and Onesimus bore this epistle, as Onesimus carried also that to Philemon. Luke, Paul's beloved physician, is with him in Rome, as are Aristarchus and John Mark. (Col. 4 : 10.) It is quite possible that Mark had finished his gospel before this time, probable in fact. If so, Paul may have read it, and that fact may have helped to restore Mark to Paul's confidence and esteem, as is here shown. Paul urges the Colossians to send this epistle on to Laodicea and to secure a copy of the one to Laodicea. (Col. 4 : 16.)

## THE LETTER TO LAODICEA (EPHESIANS)

The two oldest documents of the Greek New Testament, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, do not have "in Ephesus" in Ephesians 1 : 1. The reference to the Epistle to Laodicea in Colossians 4 : 16 seems clearly to refer to the epistle called by us Ephesians; Marcion, in fact, so calls our Ephesians. It seems plain that Paul, after writing Colossians, wrote another

one on the same general theme as a sort of circular letter to the churches of Asia (Roman province). This fact explains the absence of personal details, save the mention of Tychicus as the bearer of the epistle. (Eph. 6 : 21.) Paul spent three years in Ephesus, and a letter expressly to Ephesus with no personal items would seem strange. Some scholars even suppose that Romans 16 was really meant for Ephesus. But that hypothesis is needless in the face of the fact that our Ephesians was written as a general epistle for several churches. Ephesus was the most prominent church, and most of the manuscripts were copied from the letter kept there in which the words "in Ephesus" were added. Perhaps the original copy had no name, as we still see it in the old Greek manuscripts already mentioned. The same line of thought is followed in Ephesians as in Colossians, save that the chief emphasis is on the dignity of the church, the body of Christ which is pictured as the bride of Christ. But Gnosticism is answered as in Colossians.

## THE CLOSE OF THE ACTS

It has long been a matter of discussion as to why Luke closes Acts as he does with Paul still a prisoner in Rome. The obvious thing to understand is that Paul is still a prisoner when the book is finished. This is the view of Harnack, and seems to be the fact. If so, the Gospel of Luke was written beforehand either in Cæsarea or in Rome. A. D. 62 would be the latest probable date for Acts. The Gospel of Luke could be as early as A. D. 58. Certainly Mark's Gospel was written before Matthew and Luke, and probably some years before, since both made use of Mark. Whether Luke contemplated a third book or not is wholly speculation. As already indicated, it is possible that Luke meant the Acts to create a favorable impression in Rome for Christianity, the "crime" of which Paul alone was guilty, and in particular for Paul. Hence the great space given to the trials in Cæsarea.

## THE OUTCOME IN ROME

It is not certain that Paul's case ever came to actual trial. Two years was the usual limit for delay in such cases. It may simply have gone by default without a formal hearing and have been dismissed. If so, it may be inferred that Festus never sent any accusations against Paul, or that they were lost with the ship at Melita. Others hold that Paul was finally brought to trial either before Nero or his representative, and was set free. Still others hold that he was held a prisoner and perished in the outbreak against Christians, in A. D. 64, after the burning of Rome by Nero. The evidence for the early death of Paul is

uncertain and precarious, and I do not believe it. There is positive evidence of Paul's reappearance in the East and in the West before his death. The problem of the Pastoral Epistles enters into the case. We may suppose, as the best view in the light of present knowledge, that Paul was set free toward the end of A. D. 63, or early in 64; that he returned east to Colossæ and Philippi; that he went west to Spain, and was probably there in 64 when Rome was burned; that he came east by way of Crete, and stopped at Miletus, Ephesus, and Macedonia. We miss the story in the Acts for these closing years of Paul's life.

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**Biblical Material:** Acts 27 and 28; Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians.

**Central Thought:** Paul proud of the gospel in Rome and before Gnosticism.

**Lesson:** Keeping Christ head over all.

### FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Why Paul appealed to Rome?
2. Why had Felix and Festus not set Paul free?
3. Why the shipwreck at Malta?
4. Why Paul so long in Rome?
5. What is Gnosticism?

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why it took three ships to take Paul to Rome?
2. Was Paul set free?
3. Why did Paul write to Philippi?
4. Why to Colossæ?
5. Why to Ephesus?

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON IX

## PAUL IN ROME AND THE GNOSTIC HERESY

In this lesson Paul measures up to his full height as a statesman, a philosopher, an interpreter of Christ, a hero. Paul is a prisoner throughout this lesson, but he is still the apostle to the Gentiles, with the care of all the churches on his heart and with plans for pushing the kingdom. He faces the new period of Gnosticism with courage and marvelous insight. Plausible philosophy has had a subtle charm for people in all ages. New Thought, Christian Science, Theosophy, Bahaism, fascinate the half-educated, the neurotic, the runners after anything new. Few men are able to see the bearings of a new cult which comes with smooth platitudes that compliment the initiate with a secret knowledge not possessed by the vulgar crowd. There is a peculiar spiritual pride in such mysterious secrecy. Besides Gnosticism, Paul had to face the so-called mystery religions like Mithraism, the worship of Cybele, of Isis. These all had secret initiations, and pass-words, with rites and symbols by which the initiate was to secure redemption. The taurobolium, or blood-bath, in Mithraism, was a literal drenching in the blood of the bull in order to wash away one's sins. Some modern scholars actually argue that Paul himself fell a victim to all this mystic sacramentalism, and introduced them into Christianity in the form of baptism and the Lord's Supper. But this theory misunderstands Paul, who simply employs some of the terms of these cults in his effort to make the mystery that is in Christ more intelligible to his world. He was all things to all men in order to save some. But Paul was far from being a sacramentalist, as his conflict with the Judaizers proves. There are those who affirm that Paul perverted the simple gospel of the kingdom of Jesus by his Greek speculative theology. He both rabbinized Christ and Hellenized Jesus into a mystical Christ. But these critics misinterpret both Jesus and Paul. Paul fought two great battles in his theological environment. He drove back the onset of the Judaizers, who tried to make a Jewish Pharisaic sect out of Christianity, and preserved the spiritual nature of Christianity. He also rescued Christology from Gnosticism with its mush and immorality. Paul thought through the implication involved in accepting Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah of hope. He faced rabbinism with that foundation and he faced Gnosticism with the same truth, and he

utterly routed them both. Paul did not refuse to think. He met new facts squarely. He wanted to be sure that they were facts. But he wanted to learn. But he did not discard the old truth because of the new truth. He built the one into the other. So Paul was a mystic, but not of the mystery-religion type. He lived "in Christ" in the sense that Christ was the center and master of all his thinking and longing and loving and living. He had no fanatical raptures soon over, but he held himself to the calm and steady and unwearied pursuit of Christ as the goal of his ambition and the joy of his life.

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# LESSON X

# PAUL THE PRISONER OF CHRIST AND DEATH IN ROME

## THE BURNING OF ROME BY NERO

It was A. D. 64 that Nero, the crazy emperor, had Rome set on fire that he might enjoy the grand conflagration while he fiddled on the housetops. Nero's agents were caught as they continued to light the fires faster than the firemen could put them out. The populace flew into a rage at this wanton destruction of their property and city. Then Nero laid the blame on the Christians, since they were hated by both Gentiles and Jews. Up till this tragedy Christianity found shelter in Roman law as a form of Judaism. Paul claimed that it was the true Judaism. But now that is all changed. Henceforth it was a crime to be a Christian in Rome, and soon in the provinces which copied after the mother city. Tradition tells something of the horrors of the persecution of the Christians in Rome. The Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius tell enough. Christians were thrown to starving lions and tigers. They were covered with oil and fastened to stakes and set on fire to make an illumination while Nero drove round the Campus Martius at night. Women and children were included. Some recanted their faith in Jesus, but the majority stood true to Christ. It was now literally a choice between Lord Jesus and Lord Cæsar. The worship of the emperor was forced upon Christians or death was the penalty. As already shown there is a shade of doubt about the fate of Paul and Peter, but the balance of evidence is decidedly to the effect that they were absent from Rome at this time and met death in Rome later in A. D. 68. The burning of Rome changed the status of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.

## THE GENUINENESS OF THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

But for the Pastoral Epistles we should be at a loss for information about the work of Paul after his departure from Rome in A. D. 63. A few scholars accept the genuine Pauline authorship of these letters, and yet hold that Paul was put to death in A. D. 64 in Rome. Bartlet, of Oxford, is one of these, but it is well-nigh impossible to fit the data given into the narrative of

the Acts and in harmony with the other Pauline epistles. Some scholars treat all three epistles as spurious because they think that Paul was put to death A. D. 64, or because they find the style so different from that of the other epistles of Paul. The style is different, but so is the style of each of the other groups of Pauline epistles different. Style is a function of the subject as well as a mark of the man. And style varies with the age of the same man. Variations in style exist in the works of Shakespeare, of Milton, and of many other men. There are some who admit Pauline fragments in the Pastoral Epistles, especially the personal items in 2 Timothy. But the style of the pastorals is uniform. As for myself, I do not believe that the evidence justifies the rejection of the pastorals as really Pauline. They are, therefore, employed here for the light that they give on Paul's life and because I sincerely believe them genuine. They have the mellow ripeness and richness that one would expect in Paul the aged, whose heart turns to the young preachers as the hope of the future, and who looks eagerly and wistfully for Jesus who will welcome him into his eternal kingdom.

## THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

We know that Paul had recently been in the province of Asia. He had left Trophimus at Miletus sick. (2 Tim. 4 : 20.) He had left his cloak (or bookwrap) and books with Carpus at Troas. (2 Tim. 4 : 13.) He had met Timothy at Ephesus, or had at least exhorted him to continue there. (1 Tim. 1 : 3.) Paul is now in Macedonia, where he writes the First Epistle to Timothy, probably A. D. 67. Paul in his old age has come to lean heavily upon the young ministers whom he has gathered round him. They are the hope of the churches, and give Paul increasing joy when they remain loyal, as Timothy and Titus did. The Gnostic heresy had done much harm in Asia, and Paul warns Timothy against their teachings, which were doing much harm with their degraded view of the person of Christ and with their lax views on moral and ethical questions. It was a time of crisis, and Timothy held a strategic position as general evangelist in Ephesus with an eye upon the whole province. He was in a real sense Paul's representative in Ephesus, and he could be depended upon to be loyal to Christ. Timothy had been tested by Paul in many different situations, and Paul called him " my true child in faith " (1 Tim. 1 : 2). Paul had picked him up at Lystra on the second mission tour (Acts 16 : 1) and had him with him most of the tour. He had been one of Paul's special messengers to Corinth from Ephesus during the third tour (1 Cor. 4 : 17; 16 : 10), but had not been able to settle the trouble there. On Timothy's return from there Paul had sent him on to Mace-

donia. (Acts 19 : 22.) He was with Paul again in Corinth (Rom. 16 : 21), and in Rome during the first imprisonment there. (Phil. 2 : 19.) He was more devoted to Paul than anyone else in Rome (Phil. 2 : 20), and Paul yearned for his presence during his last Roman imprisonment (2 Tim. 4 : 21). The problems discussed in 1 Timothy are partly personal, partly ecclesiastical, and partly doctrinal. Modern critics do not specially object to the personal details, but they complain that the ecclesiasticism belongs to the second century rather than the first. But the Ignatian Epistles come in the early part of the second century, and show a far more advanced ecclesiasticism than is seen in the Pastoral Epistles. So also the Gnosticism met in the Ignatian Epistles is of a much more developed form. It is true that Paul here writes with less passion and power, and with more reserve and even restraint in spite of a certain sharpness of tone. But the topics and the tone suit precisely the old man Paul, who has ripened and mellowed with age and with suffering. The qualifications of bishops (elders) and deacons, required in chapter 3, are no less pertinent today. The directions for the various classes (chapters 5 and 6) show that Paul is seeking to meet the serious social problems of the age. It may sound a bit odd that Paul urges Christian slaves not to despise their Christian masters. (1 Tim. 6 : 2.) Sometimes these Christian slaves were men of culture, and were actually pastors of the church to which the masters belonged. In particular Paul is plain in his straight talk to the rich. (1 Tim. 6 : 3-19.) Pastors of poor people find it easy to rail at the rich. Paul urges Timothy to make good the promise of his youth (1 Tim. 1 : 18), and to guard the sacred deposit that God had put in him (1 Tim. 6 : 30).

## THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

Paul is apparently still in Macedonia, but plans to go to Nicopolis. (Titus 3 : 12.) Hence the epistle seems to be about the same time as 1 Timothy, probably shortly afterward, but still in A. D. 67. Paul had been in Crete and had left Titus there. (Titus 1 : 5.) This, of course, was not the time when the fateful shipwreck came after the stop at Fair Havens. Paul probably stopped at Crete with Titus on the return from Spain, but it is all conjecture. Titus occupies precisely the same position in Crete that Timothy does in Ephesus, that of evangelist with a superintendence over the young churches—like a foreign missionary or mission secretary today. Apparently Zenas and Apollos were the bearers of this epistle to Titus. We are not told as much about Titus as about Timothy, though he appears as a bolder figure, with more courage and force. There is no mention of him at all in the Acts, and this fact lends color to the

idea that he was the brother of Luke, as the Greek may mean in 2 Corinthians 8 : 18; 12 : 18. His first appearance with Paul was at the Jerusalem conference, when Paul flatly refused to allow this Greek disciple to be circumcised at the demand of the compromisers. (Gal. 2 : 3.) The whole case of Gentile freedom from the Mosaic ceremonialism was summed up in Titus. Timothy was half Jew and half Greek, but Titus was pure Greek. Paul sent Titus to Corinth to finish the task that Timothy practically failed in, and he succeeded in great fashion, as 2 Corinthians shows. He was a man of executive force and energy. The last mention of him is in 2 Timothy 4 : 10, when Paul says that he had sent him on a mission to Dalmatia. The conditions in Crete were very much like those in Ephesus, save that the form of Gnosticism in Crete was more Pharisaic than Essenic. The Cretans themselves bore an evil reputation, as they do today. Crete had once been the center of a great civilization before the glory of Greece came, but that was now long past. They claimed to have the grave of Zeus on their island, and that claim angered all the worshipers of this chief Greek god. Paul terms Titus also his "true child after a common faith" (Titus 1 : 4). The epistle (1 : 5-9) contains a picture of the elder (bishop) like that in 1 Timothy 3. Paul shows Titus how to apply the gospel message to the various classes in Crete. He calls Christ "our great God and Saviour" in Titus 2 : 13, according to the correct translation of the Greek.

## THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

Even those who deny the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles admit genuine Pauline fragments in 2 Timothy. There seems to be no imaginable reason for the invention of these personal details, but they are all of a piece. No adequate reason for the ascription of these epistles to Paul, if not genuine, has ever been produced. The closing days of Paul's life are here portrayed with simplicity and naturalness, with no effort at dramatic effect. Paul is again a prisoner in Rome; but he is in prison, not in his own hired house as at first. It is probably the famous Mamertine prison. He does not tell why he was arrested. It seems likely that he was seized while at Nicopolis on the testimony of some informers, who made a business of supplying Nero with fresh victims on whom to vent his spleen. It was now a crime to be a Christian, and Paul finds himself ostracized even by some of his old friends who fear the wrath of Nero. All in Asia turned away from Paul, but Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul's chain and apparently lost his life for his loyalty. (2 Tim. 1 : 16.) He has apparently spent the winter in the dark dungeon and writes to Timothy to come before

winter. (2 Tim. 4 : 21.) We do not know by whom Paul was able to send the letter to Timothy. It is Paul's last plea for help and a clarion call to Timothy. It was probably written in the spring of A. D. 68. Nero killed himself on June 8 of that year. Paul's death was certainly before that date. This epistle is called Paul's swan song. He faces death fearlessly.

## NEW CHARGES AGAINST PAUL

Paul says that he had already been acquitted of one charge. "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lions" (2 Tim. 4 : 17). Perhaps he was accused of helping to set fire to Rome. He could easily prove an alibi, as he was not in Rome then. But he adds that all forsook him. It was a dangerous thing to take a public stand for Paul now. Apparently even Luke remained away from the trial. There was nothing that he could do. But the Lord Jesus stood by Paul and strengthened him, perhaps by special vision, as he had often done in hours of crisis. So Paul escaped condemnation on the first charge, and was not to be cast to the lion's mouth. He was a Roman citizen, and was entitled to a dignified death like beheading. But there were other charges against Paul. He was a Christian and he could not and he would not deny that, not even to save his life. Paul wants Timothy to play the man and act like a true soldier of Christ. The minister of Christ must not fall into the snare of the devil (2 Tim. 2 : 26), which he sets for all preachers. Paul alludes to the snare of self-conceit, the snare of money, the snare of women.

## THE OUTLOOK FOR PAUL

Paul does not expect to be set free as he was before. His enemies can kill him, but they cannot really harm him. "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4 : 18). He now expects death. But he meets death as a conqueror. He is already being offered as a sacrifice on the altar and the time for his departure has come (2 Tim. 4 : 6), for which he had even longed (Phil. 1 : 23). He has no regrets and no repinings. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (4 : 7). That had been Paul's goal through the years (Acts 20 : 24), to carry on to the end. So he is ready for Nero's execution.

## CRAVING SYMPATHY

All the same, Paul yearns for loyal friends and feels keenly the treachery of those like Demas who forsook him in his hour of trial. Some, like Alexander the coppersmith, even took advan-

tage of Paul's plight to make a fling at him. "Only Luke is with me." Blessings on Luke for his love and loyalty to Paul in the hour of death. The beloved physician did not fail him when others from a distance fought shy of Paul. Paul urges Timothy to come quickly (4 : 9), and to pick up John Mark and bring him along, "for he is useful to me for ministering" (4 : 11). That is a beautiful touch that at the last Paul craved the comfort of the one-time coward, now courageous and competent. One may hope that Timothy and Mark came in time to be of some comfort to the aged apostle of the Gentiles. At any rate we note that Timothy was set at liberty. (Heb. 13 : 23.) He apparently came and was arrested for his loyalty to Paul. Probably after Nero's death he was set free.

## PAUL AND HIS BOOKS

There is a tragic touch in the longing of Paul for his books, especially the parchments left with Carpus at Troas. (2 Tim. 4 : 13.) We know that Paul was a man of education and of culture, in spite of "Deissmann's Saint Paul." He was a tent-maker by trade, as all Jews had a trade; but he was a man of the schools and of the brightest literary taste and quality. One would give a fortune to possess that pile of manuscripts left by Paul in his book-wrap. There were papyri rolls of various sorts and sizes. There were parchments (pieces of vellum) of portions of the Old Testament with other books, perhaps Mark's Gospel and the two books by Luke. Portions of ancient Greek writers, poets, and philosophers may have been in that pile. The old preacher longed for his old books in his loneliness, books that he knew well and loved. No man is really lonely who has great books for mind and soul.

## THE DEATH OF PAUL

It is not hard to picture the closing scene. One morning the executioner came and beckoned for Paul to follow as he led the way out of the dungeon. We may suspect that Luke, Timothy, and John Mark walked along by Paul's side. They went outside the city, perhaps along the Ostian Road where the head of Paul was laid upon the block. Tradition says that Lucina buried the body of Paul. Some excitement has been caused by the discovery of pictures of Paul and Peter on what was supposed to be their tombs. It is not impossible that Peter was put to death about the same time and in Rome, but of this no one knows. But we do know that the influence of Paul has grown with the years. Men have attempted to discount Paul as an interpreter of Christ, but to little purpose. Judged by every

standard, Paul is the supreme interpreter of Jesus Christ. His day is not done. It will never be done so long as men live who love Jesus and who hunger after Christ as Paul did.

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**Biblical Material:** The Pastoral Epistles.

**Central Thought:** Paul fighting the good fight.

**Lesson:** Passing on the torch today.

### FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Probable course of Paul's life after the close of Acts.
2. Sketch of the life of Titus.
3. Sketch of the life of Timothy.
4. Probable reasons for character of the Pastoral Epistles.

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The burning of Rome by Nero.
2. New charges against Paul.
3. Time of Paul's death.

## PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON X

## PAUL THE PRISONER OF CHRIST AND DEATH IN ROME

In teaching this last lesson on Paul the teacher has to master the Pastoral Epistles. I believe that they are genuine and cannot be fitted into the events recorded by Luke in the Acts. Hence they give us glimpses of Paul's life after his release from the first Roman imprisonment. It is not a complete story, but it is intelligible and will repay careful study. Without this climax Paul's life suffers a loss. It goes out in an eclipse if we cannot use the Pastoral Epistles. The epistles give the finishing touches to Paul's own devotion to Christ, and show that Paul has not perverted the original picture of Jesus as told in the Gospels. That is a curious modern heresy that Paul invented the divine Christ and added this theological conception to the historical Jesus. That is to make Paul as bad as the Gnostics, whom he denounced so sharply. That is to set at naught Paul's own knowledge of the risen Christ, and to make him a mere follower

of pious legends received from emotional enthusiasts. The very intellectual virility of Paul argues against such a flabby theology on his part. He was not a mere eschatological apocalyptist, nor a mere philosophical Hellenizer, nor a mere mystic sacramentalist. Paul was open to all truth, and was all things to all men to win them to Christ. He kept an open mind for points of contact with the world about him, but he never wavered from his conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was risen from the dead and was the Lord and Saviour of men. It used to be the case that critics tried to get back of Paul to Christ. When they did they found the Christ of Paul in the Synoptic Gospels as well as in the Gospel of John. Now it is seen to be more sensible to go back to Christ with Paul. The Christ of the Logia is at bottom the Christ of Mark, of Matthew, of Luke, of John, of Peter, of Paul. Christ was Paul's hero as well as his Lord and Redeemer. He had no apology to offer in Athens or in Rome for his worship of Jesus Christ. He brought every thought into captivity and laid it at the feet of Jesus. In intellectual acumen Paul had no superior. No man alive today can measure a lance with Paul of Tarsus. So he stands today as the great exponent of Christ for men of learning. He was a product of the schools. He was at home with men of learning. If men today wish to understand the mind of Christ they must study Paul. He employed the language of his time, and some of his figures do not fit our mental environment, but we can readily grasp his idea. He had a marvelous capacity for applying the principles of the gospel to the problems of his day in such a way that we can see the way to apply the same principles to our problems. Paul was alive and vital, and not merely doctrinaire and abstract. He met the issues of his day, and shows us how to meet ours. Above all, he placed Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. No one who reads Paul can fail to come to terms with Christ. Paul lived Christ and he died for Christ. He projected Christ upon the Roman Empire with such energy that the world will never recover from that impact.

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# LESSON XI

# A GLANCE AT OTHER WORKERS

## THE SO-CALLED CATHOLIC EPISTLES

There are seven epistles which have long been called Catholic Epistles, or General Epistles, on the idea that they were not addressed to individuals or to a local church, but to the Christians at large. Now this is certainly not true of 2 and 3 John, but does seem to be true of 1 John and 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, and James. There is nothing in 1 John to indicate to whom it was sent, but it probably was sent from Ephesus to the surrounding churches of Asia. First Peter was sent to believers in five Roman provinces, and 2 Peter went to the same readers. Jude was apparently sent to the saints in the same region. The Epistle to the Hebrews is called general by some scholars and is so listed in the twentieth-century New Testament, but that seems to be a mistake. The appeal of the book seems to be clearly to Jewish Christians in a definite church. Some Protestants object to the use of the term "Catholic" as applied to the seven epistles commonly grouped under this title (James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude, 1 and 2, 3 John), because of a possible admission that they are Roman Catholic in origin or teaching; but that is mere prejudice and ignorance, besides. But General Epistles will do as well, save that neither term suits 2 and 3 John. They do not belong to one period or date.

## THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

There is division of opinion among scholars concerning the date of the Epistle of James. In Lesson VII, A. D. 48 was suggested as the probable date. Some would put it after the destruction of Jerusalem, and would represent James as opposing Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. But the atmosphere of the epistle is rather of the time before the Judaizing controversy arose and before the issues faced in Galatians and Romans. The outlook is that of one more in contact with the Sermon on the Mount, and the problems are those of Jewish Christians whose meeting-place is called the synagogue. If this early date is accepted, this epistle stands apart in time from the other Catholic Epistles. In fact, these epistles cover a wide range in date. The Johannine Epistles probably belong to the period

A. D. 80 to 90, while the Epistles of Peter and Jude, if genuine as I believe, would come between A. D. 64 and 68.

## SKETCH OF SIMON PETER

It is important to keep Simon Peter in his proper place. The Roman Catholics have made him the first pope and the founder of the church in Rome. He was not the founder of the church in Rome, though he may have visited Rome. He was not pope at all, for certainly Paul did not recognize him as his superior. It is not even clear that he was the leader of the twelve apostles before the great Pentecost. Peter, James, John, and Judas were all claimants for that post, as is shown in the Gospels. (See my "Types of Preachers in the New Testament.") They had all too frequent disputes among themselves as to who was the greatest among them. But Peter was quick to speak and often spoke nobly, and on the day of Pentecost gave his first full interpretation of the life and work of Jesus. Peter is the one disciple whose career is pictured with clearness in the Gospels and in Acts. As in a mirror we see reflected in him the changes wrought by the coming of Christ. The touch of human nature so plain in him draws us all closer to this impulsive and useful man. Jesus understood him, and forgave his shameful and cowardly denial on his repentance. Luke tells the story of his leadership in Jerusalem in the first part of the Acts. (Chap. 1 to 12.) After that Paul takes the center of the stage and Luke drops Peter's work save his part in the Jerusalem conference. It is probable that Mark wrote his Gospel under the influence of Peter. He seems to use Peter's eyes in many ways. Hence Peter's preaching is preserved to a large extent in Mark's Gospel. Tradition is busy with many stories about the work of Peter here and there with Mark as his interpreter. Peter knew Aramaic better than Greek, though he used both. After Paul's activities among the Gentiles, Peter was the recognized leader of the work among the Jews while Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. He was not so gifted as Paul and was not a schoolman, but a fisherman; but he was a man of great versatility and sympathy. It is not certain when he died, whether at the same time with Paul in Rome or not. A. D. 68 is the most probable date, though some argue for A. D. 64. The two epistles ascribed to Peter are not accepted by all modern scholars. Second Peter is rejected by more than any other New Testament book. There are difficulties which will be discussed presently. Each man has to decide for himself, but both of these epistles bear the evidences of genuineness in my opinion; hence they are used as part of the material for the picture of Simon Peter. One point may be made here—the speeches of Peter in the Acts bear remarkable

resemblance to the Epistles of Peter. No one thinks that Luke made use of Peter's epistles. It is certain that Peter made no use of the Acts. It is not likely that Luke could have invented speeches so much in Peter's own style. Peter has to take a place lower than that of Paul and of the apostle John, but he ranks third in the great circle of men who were used of God to interpret Christ to the first generation of believers and so for all ages.

## FIRST PETER

It seems probable that Silvanus (Silas of Acts and Paul's companion) is the amanuensis as well as the bearer of this letter. (1 Peter 5 : 12.) If so, one can readily understand how this epistle shows none of the roughness of style apparent in 2 Peter. The author says that he is in Babylon (1 Peter 5 : 13) together with his wife (comp. 1 Cor. 9 : 5) and Mark, who is no longer with Barnabas. But it is quite likely that Peter here means mystical Babylon, the term used for Rome in the Apocalypse of John. The reason for the use by John is plain because of the Roman persecution, which made it dangerous for Christians to be in Rome and to speak plainly about the Roman persecutions. But if Peter was in Rome about A. D. 65 he was in daily peril by reason of Nero's violent persecution of the Christians, and would be amply justified in his concealment by the use of Babylon for Rome. He does speak of "the fiery trial among you" (1 Peter 4 : 12), "which cometh upon you to prove you." In 1 : 6 and 7 he says: "Though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire." And in 4 : 16 he says, "But if a man suffer as a Christian." That is the new note struck in this epistle. It is now a crime to be a Christian since Nero's rage against Christians in Rome. The provinces would naturally imitate the example of the mother city. So Peter writes from Rome, with the fires of persecution raging all around him, to the believers in five Roman provinces—Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia—words of cheer and courage. There is no longer a tinge of cowardice in Peter. If he is in the old Babylon, his message comes from the East out of the center of the Babylonian Judaism. Peter's gospel in this epistle bears a marked likeness to that of Paul. We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1 Peter 1 : 18.) He lays emphasis on faith, love, the new birth, the new life in Christ. He reminds his readers that they are a spiritual house (1 Peter 2 : 5), though scattered over these Roman provinces, the very image used by Jesus to Peter in Matthew 16 : 18 and 19. Peter holds up a high standard

of real righteousness and exposes the weakness and sins of special classes. The most difficult passage is the one about Christ preaching to the spirits in prison. (1 Peter 3 : 18-22.) Roman Catholics use this passage for their doctrine of probation and purgatory, and some Protestants take it to teach a second chance after death. But it is hard to explain why Christ gave this message only to the people of Noah's time when so many other spirits were also in prison. It seems more natural to understand Peter as meaning that Christ in Noah's time warned those who are now in prison. Some, like Moffatt and Goodspeed, follow Rendel Harris's suggestion that "Enoch" has dropped out of verse 19 and should be restored to the text. In that case, Enoch, not Christ, did the preaching. But that interpretation leaves unexplained the mention of Enoch at all, but certainly Peter does not teach baptismal remission of sins in 1 Peter 3 : 21. In 1 Peter 5 : 1 one is reminded of John 21 when Jesus told Peter to feed the lambs and when he taught him humility.

## SECOND PETER

The readers of this epistle are the same as those of the first. (2 Peter 3 : 1.) The writer calls himself Peter as in 1 Peter 1 : 1, only here he says "Simon Peter" (2 Peter 1 : 1). If one does not accept the epistle as genuine, he has a problem on his hands if he retains it as a part of the New Testament. It is not like Hebrews, which gives no name as author. If it is pseudepigraphic, or written in Peter's name by a later writer, it may have been done with an innocent motive; but it lacks the weight of Peter's name though using it. Such a literary device was sometimes used, but one hesitates to admit it here unless a clear case is made out for it. That is not true. There is a difference in style between the two epistles, as anyone can see; but if 2 Peter is written by Peter himself in his more or less uncouth Greek (Acts 4 : 13), or by another amanuensis than Silvanus, the difference in style is easily intelligible. The personal notes in the epistle become purely artificial if the author was not in reality Simon Peter. There is a direct description of his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration (2 Peter 1 : 17, 18) which is in perfect keeping with the narratives in the Synoptic Gospels. It is objected that Peter would not say "your apostles" (2 Peter 3 : 2) when he was one of them. But that objection does not carry conviction. The most serious objection is Peter's praise of Paul in 2 Peter 3 : 15 and 16 when he speaks of Paul's epistles as on a par with "the other scriptures." It is held as conclusive by many modern scholars that Peter would not so describe Paul's writings because of the breach with Paul (Gal. 2 : 11-14), and because no one in the first cen-

tury put Paul's epistles on a par with the Old Testament. But there is no evidence that Peter remained alienated from Paul. Besides, one may be creating a false anachronism in denying that Paul's epistles were received as Scripture so early as this. From the very start Paul laid great emphasis on his own epistles. (1 Thess. 5 : 27; 2 Thess. 2 : 2; 3 : 14, 17.) This Second Epistle of Peter has a wonderful passage about the steps or stages in Christian character. (1 : 3-11.) It asserts that prophecy is not of private disclosure, but of the moving of God's Spirit. (1 : 20, 21.) It pictures in chapter 2 the fate of the Gnostic heretics in language like that in Jude. It warns in chapter 3 flippant skeptics of the Lord's second coming, that one day with the Lord's clock may be as a thousand years or a thousand years as one day. Surely here we have a pointed warning not to insist on a literal meaning of a thousand years.

## THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

This little epistle belongs to the same general period as 2 Peter. If Peter wrote 2 Peter he wrote it before his death, which was not later than A. D. 68. It is clear that there is some literary connection between 2 Peter 2 and Jude. Critics are not agreed as to which is the earlier. The point is, Which is more likely, that 2 Peter should incorporate most of Jude or that Jude should take out most of one chapter in 2 Peter? There is more vividness in Jude with more signs of originality. So I argue for the slight priority of Jude, but there is absolutely no way to settle the matter. Jude does not call himself the brother of Jesus, as James does not, but the slave of Jesus and brother of James. The author pictures in bold figures the Gnostic heretics of the time who had a degrading view of the person of Jesus Christ and a loose view of life, "denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (ver. 4). The passage in verse 14 seems to be a quotation from the Book of Enoch. Prophesy may be used in a free sense.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

No name appears as the author of this great book. We are left to the realm of conjecture. One guess is as good as another, and I guess Apollos. Broadus thought that Luke may have written it out as an address of Paul's. There is no evidence that Paul wrote it. The argument is massive and powerful like that of Paul, but with more oratory and rhetoric. Origen said that God alone knew the author. But no book has more of the spirit of Christ in it. The date appears to be before the destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70, since otherwise he would surely

have mentioned the destruction of the temple in chapter 8. The release of Timothy is mentioned in 13 : 23. If that refers to the imprisonment of Timothy after he came at Paul's request, A. D. 68, we are shut up to A. D. 69 as the probable year. The author apparently writes from Italy (13 : 24), though he may mean that persons from Italy are with him. He is writing to a Jewish Christian church that has suffered severely in persecution and loss of property (10 : 32-39), and in the martyrdom of their leaders (13 : 7). All this would suit Jerusalem, but we really do not know. The purpose of the epistle is to hold the readers to Christ and to persuade them not to give up Christianity and go back to Judaism, as their Jewish neighbors were urging and as some had done. The Jews held Jesus up to ridicule and glorified all the privileges of the covenant people of Israel. The author turns the tables on the Jews and shows the glory of Jesus and hence the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. He proves that Jesus is superior to the Old Testament prophets, to the angels both as Son of God and Son of man, to Moses, and to Aaron, and to the whole Levitical priesthood. The bulk of the book is devoted to the discussion of the priesthood of Christ, and this constitutes the chief feature of the powerful argument. There are frequent exhortations to loyalty to Jesus and warnings against apostasy as illustrated by the Israelites who perished in the wilderness. The eleventh chapter gives the roster of the faithful who held on and were true before the promise of the Messiah came true in Jesus. And Jesus himself is the hero of faith and the author and finisher of faith for us. If one cannot be Jew and Christian, let him leave his Judaism and take his stand with Christ on Calvary.

## FIRST JOHN

There is no name given as the author of this epistle, and it is not known to whom it was sent nor whether it was written before or after 2 and 3 John. But it is plain that the book was written by the same man as the Gospel of John. In fact, the epistle reads like an appendix to the Fourth Gospel, and many of the phrases in the Fourth Gospel reappear in the epistle; but there is a difference. The Gospel is written as the writer expressly says (John 20 : 31), "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name." The humanity of Jesus is there assumed and his deity is proved. In the epistle the deity of Jesus Christ is assumed while the humanity is proved. The reason for proving the humanity of Jesus was that the Docetic Gnostics denied it and held that Jesus was really an æon, or emanation from God, who only appeared to be a man. Hence John argues vigorously

that Jesus had an actual human body, and appeals to the sense of sight, of hearing, and of touch to prove it. (1 John 1 : 1-4.) "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God" (1 John 4 : 3). But there were also Cerinthian Gnostics who denied the identity of Jesus and Christ, very much after the fashion of those today who distinguish so sharply between the Jesus of history and the Christ of theology. These held that the Christ was an æon, that came on Jesus at his baptism and left him on the cross. John calls such a man Antichrist and a liar who "denieth that Jesus is the Christ" (1 John 2 : 22). Hence John lays emphasis on the blood of Jesus that washes us from sin. The Gnostics were loose in their living and schismatic and intolerant. Hence John talks a great deal about love and faith and sin. John warns his readers against the folly of denying a sinful nature or absolute sinlessness (1 : 8, 10), but the believer must not give in to a life of sin (3 : 9) and, in case of committing sin, must not be hopeless, because we have Jesus as our Advocate with the Father (2 : 1, 2). The author demands a life of goodness as proof of the victory of faith. The three heavenly witnesses—the Spirit, the water, and the blood—testify to the humanity and the deity of Jesus as Son of God and Son of man. (5 : 5-12.)

## SECOND JOHN

The "elect lady," to whom the epistle is addressed, is probably a devout Christian woman, though a church is often understood by the phrase. The brief message is similar in tone to 1 John. The writer calls those deceivers who "confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh" (ver. 7), a denial of the incarnation as a possibility, not of the second coming. The teaching of Christ is set up as the standard for all, even in the matter of hospitality. (Ver. 9, 10.)

## THIRD JOHN

In both of these epistles the writer calls himself the elder, but this, of course, does not mean that he was not an apostle. Peter, likewise, speaks of himself as "fellow elder" (1 Peter 5 : 1). Whether Gaius, to whom the letter is sent, is the same Gaius who was Paul's host in Corinth (Rom. 16 : 23), but now living elsewhere, we have no way of knowing. John makes a plea for the missionaries who were carrying the name of Christ amid persecutions. He warns Gaius against Diotrephes, who not only refused to entertain John or his helpers, but actually turned all out of the church who dared to do so. But Demetrius is not a church "boss" or dictator.

**Biblical Material:** The Epistle of James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, Hebrews, 1 and 2 and 3 John.

**Central Thought:** Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever.

**Lesson:** Seeing Christ from many angles and seeing him whole.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. The meaning of Catholic Epistles.
2. The life of Simon Peter.
3. The authorship of 2 Peter.
4. The argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews.
5. The authorship of the Johannine Epistles.
6. Docetic and Cerinthian Gnosticism.

## FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why so many different kinds of writing in the New Testament?
2. Relation of the New Testament to the history of Christianity.
3. Value to us of historical knowledge in understanding the New Testament.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON XI

## A GLANCE AT OTHER WORKERS

Biblical theology is a comparatively modern method of study in contrast to systematic theology, which covers the whole body of Christian theology. The method of biblical theology is to get the theology of one writer or of one book. Thus, as applied to the New Testament teaching about Christ, one notes the Christology of Paul, of John, of Peter, of Hebrews, of Luke, of Matthew, of Mark, of James, of Jude, and even of the Logia (the non-Markan portions of Matthew and Luke). This is a useful way to look at the teaching about Jesus, provided we do not overemphasize the differences and minimize the likenesses. Each writer has his own point of view and describes Christ as he sees him. But, after all is said, the picture is essentially the same. Some critics, to be sure, claim to be able to brush aside all the theological additions to the bare historical Jesus, and to find only a Galilean prophet in the original who was glorified by his followers into deity. But one can only do that by tearing to pieces the very oldest documents that we have which give us Jesus as Son of God and Son of man. The historical method of study does not justify such perverse misuse of the documents. These scholars accuse Paul and John of perverting the simple Jesus, the Galilean prophet, and making a god out of a man. But I charge them with distorting the evidence and with creating a mere prophet, contrary to the documents and contrary to the fact. The historical method rightly used is the true one, but in the hands of men who are prejudiced against the supernatural it tears to tatters the records and the history and leaves us with inconsistent and incoherent scraps. With only a human Christ to preach to men we not merely have no gospel to offer, but we also have a pitiful picture of a misguided enthusiast who imagined himself to be divine, and who is today hailed as the world's greatest teacher in spite of his hallucinations and vagaries. The picture falls to pieces. That conception of Christ would never have conquered the Roman world, and it will not hold the world today. There is great profit in seeing how each of the New Testament writers in his own way sets forth Jesus Christ. No one tells all, nor do all together tell all. But each has a rich color to add to the many-sided Jesus, who is both God and man. They all teach the incarnation of the Son of God, who died for our sins and who rose from the grave and has taken his place at the right hand of God. They all preach the grace

of God in Christ, the Saviour from sin and the Lord of our lives. They all call us to a world-wide propaganda to win the world for Christ. They all hold out the hope of victory and the promise of the coming of Christ as King in his own good time. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament, by nine writers, comprise the greatest collection of books in all the ages, most precious for the race, most needful for each life. They will never grow old. And yet they call for study. Each spring sees the miracle of life in response to the warmth of the sun. Each life sees the miracle of grace as the soul touches the words of life and follows Christ.

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# LESSON XII

# THE CONFLICT AS SEEN FROM HEAVEN

## THE MEANING OF THE APOCALYPSE

The word apocalypse means revelation or unveiling. To many this seems a paradox, because the Apocalypse of John is precisely the most difficult book in the New Testament for us to understand. The revelation in books of this type is made by means of symbols which are plain to those who know what the symbols mean. Times of persecution led to the use of apocalyptic imagery by the Jews in Old Testament times, as in Ezekiel, Isaiah, Zechariah, Daniel. The tribulations during the interbiblical period gave rise to a whole literature of this type, like Baruch, Enoch, etc. This form of symbolism was often used in discussing questions of eschatology, and Jesus himself employed it because of its currency, as we see in Mark 13, Matthew 24 and 25, Luke 21. Sometimes the symbols are interpreted, as in the case of the harlot and mystical Babylon meaning Rome. Sometimes we are today at an utter loss, as in the matter of the four horses. It is plain that the imagery is sometimes purely figurative, as we see in Peter's interpretation of Joel's language (Joel 2 : 28) about the wonders on earth and the moon turning into blood. Peter says pointedly that "this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel" (Acts 2 : 16). He applies that language to the events on Pentecost. The Apocalypse is like a moving panorama, and sets forth in vivid dramatic fashion great events and truths in startling pictures that remain in the mind. Children are fond of hearing Revelation, for they see the wondrous pictures with wide-open eyes.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

The author writes for a practical purpose. He wishes to comfort the Christians who are in the midst of fierce persecution with the promise of final victory in the end. He foresees more persecutions, and unrolls them in a series of graphic pictures, but the triumph of the risen and reigning Christ is certain. Many will be slain here on earth by Christ's enemies, but they will wear white robes in heaven that have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. In the end of the day the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. (Rev.

11 : 15.) It matters little whether one is able to understand the many symbols in the book which probably had a meaning to the early readers of the book. (Rev. 1 : 3.) We can easily see the point of the whole book. We are to endure patiently the tribulations that come, in confident hope of final victory.

## THE AUTHOR

He calls himself John (1 : 1, 4, 9; 22 : 8), and says that he was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. This implies that he is in exile when he saw the series of visions and wrote the book. The question is at once raised whether he is John the apostle and whether he is the same man as the beloved disciple, who is the author of the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles. Various views are held concerning this most disputed and difficult problem in New Testament criticism. The arguments are too complicated and technical for discussion here. There is at present no consensus of opinion among scholars. My own views are briefly stated in my "Divinity of Christ in the Gospel of John." The chief objection made against identity of authorship is the undoubted difference in language, which is much more manifest in the Greek than in the English. The discovery of the papyri fragments in Egypt amply illustrates the freedom of the vernacular Koiné in the matter of forms and syntax, especially among the less educated writers. It so happens that John and Peter, who show like variations (Apocalypse and 2 Peter), are precisely the two men who are termed unlearned and ignorant men by the Sanhedrin. (Acts 4 : 13.) They were not men of the schools. If one bears in mind the undue excitement of these visions, and the loneliness of John on Patmos, he may see sufficient explanation of the syntactical lapses in the Apocalypse. Besides, there is an undoubted Aramaic touch in the language, and the very apocalyptic imagery is nearly all from the Old Testament. So, with all due respect to the idea of the so-called presbyter John and the Johannine school and redactors and what not, the balance of real evidence appears to me to favor identity of authorship. The points of likeness are more than those of unlikeness and the subject-matter is very different. Once admit identity of authorship and the apostle John stands before us as the author on both internal and external evidence.

## THE DATE

The evidence of Irenæus puts the date in the reign of Domitian, about A. D. 95. He received this information from Polycarp, who was a disciple of John in Ephesus. There is nothing

in the book that conflicts with this view. It was once argued that the book gave a picture of the Neronian persecutions, and hence belonged to the reign of Nero, about A. D. 68. It was also felt that this early date best explained the grammatical solecisms in the style before the author got a firm grip on his Greek. But we have seen that there is another way of explaining these linguistic lapses, even if the book is the last one written by the author. He had no amanuensis, and no helpers on Patmos as in Ephesus. (John 21 : 24, 25.) The background of the Domitianic persecutions suits the story of the book better than the time of Nero. Modern scholars quite generally place it at the close of the reign of Domitian.

## THEORIES OF INTERPRETATION

They are many and no one is wholly satisfactory. The book has been used by faddists of all sorts through the ages, and is today the victim of much misinterpretation. The Chiliasts early took much of the language literally, and not only interpreted the thousand years in chapter 20 so, but exaggerated everything else on a like scale. Bunches of grapes would be a thousand feet long or weigh a thousand pounds, etc. Such Chiliastic exaggerations of interpretation brought the book into disrepute. Some took the first thousand years of Christian history to be the millennium and looked for the end of the world then. When the Roman Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity some held that the millennium began then. When Luther's Reformation came, the two beasts were held to be pagan Rome and papal Rome. To answer this view, Roman Catholic scholars held that the book related entirely to the past (preterist theories), and was all fulfilled either in the reign of Nero or of Domitian. Other Roman Catholic scholars took it all in the future (futurist theories). Some held that the millennium began with the conversion of Constantine. The 1,260 days gave a deal of trouble. If that symbol be taken as a day for a year, why not take the thousand years in the same way and make it 365,000 years? Peter had already said that with the Lord a day could be a thousand years or a thousand years as one day. The millennium plays a really unimportant part in the book itself (only in chapter 20), and yet it has been made to dominate the interpretation of the book by premillennial or postmillennial theories. As for myself it is by no means clear what the millennium is, nor how long it lasts, nor what is its precise relation to the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. So I leave the millennium to one side in my own thinking, and grasp firmly and clearly the promise of the personal second coming of Christ as a glorious hope and have no program of events in my

mind for that great event. The two most common theories of all for the interpretation of Revelation are the continuous and the synchronous historical views. Both of these theories take the book as a sort of chart of church history, if not of general history. Many such charts have been made, but they convince few outside of the authors of them. Something can be said for each of these views. The continuous theory takes each series as it comes in chronological order. The synchronous theory takes each series of seven—seals, trumpets, bowls—as covering the whole period to the judgment day. The close of each series does bear a verisimilitude to the end. But against both of these theories lies the objection that much of the history has already passed by, and we ought to be able to interpret the seals at any rate or some of them. Others take all the symbolism in a spiritual sense, with no historical references at all. What is one to do with all these views? Probably nothing at all. And yet the book fascinates one. I can only give my own use of the book. I take it to be the work of the apostle John, written in the reign of Domitian, about A. D. 95, in the midst of bitter persecution in Rome and in the provinces (possibly the two beasts). The book thus has this actual historical background, and is written for the express purpose of cheering the saints in spite of the death of the martyrs and of the many troubles to come. Jesus will win and is himself the captain in charge of the hosts on earth. Dire doom is foretold for Rome and all the enemies of Christ by a series of powerful panoramas. Glimpses of heaven are given to hearten the struggling soldiers of Christ with a picture of the glories awaiting them there. But the struggle in the time of Domitian will be repeated from time to time till Jesus comes again. So then the book has a word of cheer for the church militant through all the ages, but with no chart of events. It is only in broad outline that the purpose of the book is seen now as then.

## THE RISEN AND REIGNING CHRIST

The chief thing in the Apocalypse of John is the picture of Christ as sitting at the right hand of God in heaven, and as ruling and reigning and carrying forward the conflict here on earth. We have picture after picture of this central and dominating idea. We see it in the opening vision. (1 : 12-22.) Here Christ is alive forevermore with the power of life and death in his hands. He is the Master as he moves among the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. In chapter 5 Jesus is worshiped in heaven just as the Father in chapter 4. Jesus is here the Lamb that was slain, who is now the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who has purchased with his blood men out of every nation of

earth. He is worshiped with the song of redemption. In the seven seals men flee the wrath of the Lamb (6 : 16), or their robes are washed white in the blood of the Lamb (7 : 14). The devil wars with the women and man child, but Christ wins. "Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their life even unto death" (Rev. 12 : 10, 11). Shouts of joy are heard in heaven over the downfall of Babylon. (19 : 1-10.) Christ is Conqueror, and his garments are dipped in the blood of his enemies and his name is the Word of God. (Rev. 19 : 14; comp. John 1 : 1; 1 John 1 : 1.) Jesus is himself the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Rev. 22 : 13), as God is (1 : 8). Jesus is coming again. It will be "shortly" (1 : 1) and even "quickly" (22 : 20), as God counts time. Let us say with John, "Amen: come, Lord Jesus." Meanwhile we can pass on the invitation to all to partake of the water of life so freely offered before it is too late. (Rev. 22 : 17.) The lesson of the Apocalypse of John is that we should lift up our heads and look for the coming of the King whatever life may bring. We can carry on. He came once and they crucified him. He will come again, and we shall crown him King of kings and Lord of lords.

## THE SEVEN CHURCHES

The book as a whole is addressed to seven churches in the province of Asia—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea—as he tells us in 1 : 11. The book was to be read in public assembly in each church and the people were to listen. (1 : 3.) Then there is a special message to each one of the seven churches (chap. 2 and 3), peculiarly adapted to the needs of that church. There is a graphic sketch of the conditions in each church, and a severe arraignment and exposure of all sins found there. There is praise when ground for it is seen, and a promise is held out to each one in any church who holds out faithful to Christ. It is plain that these are real letters to actual churches, and set forth conditions as they were. These seven cities form a circle with Ephesus as the chief one. They are on one of the great Roman roads, and in a curious way represent most of our modern churches of one type or another. The angel messenger of the church is probably the pastor of the church, who is largely held responsible for the conditions found there. There is nothing in the book more pertinent and practical for modern churches than a study of these two chapters.

## THE DOOM OF ROME

The one resounding and reverberating thunder in the book is that against Rome because of the persecution of the followers of Christ. Over and over again the doom of Rome is proclaimed. The superficial critic may reply that Rome still stands and boasts of being the Eternal City. But Rome was sacked by the Goths and Vandals and the Roman Empire did fall, as Gibbon has so powerfully portrayed. If one looks only at the broad historical fact, and does not try to fill in the specific interpretation of each symbolic detail, he finds no real difficulty here. And one thing more is to be said: Present Rome is Christian Rome, not pagan Rome that persecuted the saints in the reigns of Nero, Domitian, Flavius, and Decius. If Protestants complain that it is papal Rome, which is as bad as pagan Rome, for papal Rome has persecuted Protestants, we may at least pause before we bring this fact as a serious charge against John's apocalyptic imagery. And even papal Rome has been shorn of her temporal power. So the doom of Rome as the great harlot, mystical Babylon, remains on the canvas of history as in the panorama of the Apocalypse of John.

## THE JUDGMENT

The Apocalypse of John pictures a general judgment of both good and evil in chapters 20 to 22, that resembles in broad outline the picture of the sheep and the goats and the ten virgins in Matthew 25 as drawn by Jesus, who will be the Judge of the quick and the dead. The same fact is presented by Jesus at the close of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7) in the discrimination drawn in the end. Jesus also set forth the same final discrimination in the parables of the Tares and of the Net. (Matt. 13.) I do not undertake to relate this final judgment to the various millennial theories. We are all to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ as Paul declared. (2 Cor. 5 : 10.) Death closes the case for all of us and brings the verdict for each of us, but there is a day of confirmation ahead of us all when Jesus hands over to the Father the consummation of his work. (1 Cor. 15 : 24.)

## HELL

These closing chapters of the Apocalypse give vivid and terrifying pictures of hell as the abode of the eternally lost with the devil and his angels. It is called the second death, the lake of fire. (20 : 14.) The first death is the close of the life here. The second death is eternal death. It is also the place "without" the heavenly city, where are the dogs and the sorcerers and

the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone that loves and makes a lie. (Rev. 22 : 15.) Jesus called it a place where the worm dies not, as well as Gehenna, and as the place of torment in hades with a great chasm fixed between it and Abraham's bosom. Is this imagery to be taken literally? Or is it merely the effort to put in human language the fact of future punishment in symbolism that falls far short of the terrible reality? Each one must decide for himself. The fact of eternal punishment is a dreadful thing to contemplate. It is justified by eternal sinning against God. If men on earth rebel against God, in hell they will rebel more. But it is not necessary to understand that hell is a literal lake of fire. Hell is far more horrible than we can conceive, but it is hardly a physical experience, but a spiritual one as outcasts from the presence and the favor of God.

## HEAVEN

Few people insist on taking the beautiful imagery of heaven literally, though the Swedenborgians do. In chapter 4 we have a picture of the throne of God with its environs all in physical imagery. In the later chapters heaven is pictured as a bride, as a mountain, as a city, as a renewed earth. Those who insist on a literal and physical interpretation of the imagery of hell should hold to a literal and physical interpretation of the symbolism of heaven. I do not expect to walk upon actual streets of gold nor to pluck actual fruit from trees by the river of life. To me all these wonderful pictures of heaven fall far short of the glorious reality. Jesus said in John 14 that heaven was our home, that it was being with him in the Father's house, and that he would take each one of us along with him to the Father's house, where there is room for all. That will be heaven for me to be with Jesus in the Father's house, with the saints and loved ones who have gone on before. There will be no sorrow there, and no crying, and no darkness, and no sin.

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**Biblical Material:** The Apocalypse of John.

**Central Thought:** Christ the Conqueror.

**Lesson:** Coming up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

## FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

1. Date of John's Apocalypse.
2. Reasons for Johannine authorship.
3. Theories for interpreting the book.
4. Practical use of the book to us.
5. Picture of Christ in the Apocalypse.

### FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Why John used the apocalyptic method?
2. Probable date of the book.
3. Purpose of the author in writing the book.

# PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON XII

# THE CONFLICT AS SEEN FROM HEAVEN

Old Doctor South said that the Book of Revelation either found one crazy or left him so. The existence of this prejudice against the book explains much of the neglect of this volume by so many Christians. It is a fact that insane persons show a great fondness for the visions in Revelation. It is probably true that some people have developed a monomania on the subject that has unbalanced their minds. Certainly some people are so dogmatic with their fads and fancies about the Apocalypse of John that they make themselves a bore, if not a nuisance, to their friends. But Adolph Harnack, the famous German critic, considers the Apocalypse the plainest book in the New Testament. It is, if one will only use his key to the symbols. The funny part of it all is that every key to this lock works for one man and usually for no others. All sorts of theories about the origin of the book exist. Some of these suggest the incorporation of older Jewish apocalypses. Others suggest a series of editors before the book took final shape. But, as a matter of fact, all the pictures in the book are already in one part or another of the Old Testament. There is not a single formal quotation from the Old Testament in the book, and yet it is saturated with Old Testament language and imagery. Some suggest serious dislocations, and argue for various rearrangements of the material. Others make the book wholly a literary performance, with no basis in fact for any of the visions. But surely it is not an impossibility for the lonely apostle in exile on Patmos to have had visions and to have written them down in his rather imperfect Greek idiom. There is little of literary quality in the book so far as the language is concerned, but few books in all the world have more appeal to the imagination than the Apocalypse of John. We are indebted to it for most of our imagery of heaven and for hope in trial and tribulation. Somehow we all feel that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and that meanwhile it is worth all that it costs to keep on at the task of making this earth a colony of heaven and

a fit place for men and women and even for children to live in. That is the way to answer the prayer of Jesus to the Father that his kingdom may come and that his will may be done on earth as in heaven.

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# LESSON XIII

# REVIEW OF NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY

## THE ENVIRONMENT

Christianity is a revelation of God in Christ, but Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God. He came into human history at a definite time and place, in the fulness of time, when God's purpose was ripe and when the world was somewhat prepared for the coming of the long-looked-for Messiah. So then Christianity is also a historical religion. It takes root in Palestine in the first century A. D., in the midst of the Judaism of the time which had wandered from the teaching of the Old Testament prophets. The opening chapters of the New Testament take us into a new world, the world of Cæsar, of Pharisee, of Sadducee, of scribe, of publican, of synagogue. What will this new Jewish atmosphere, under the rule of the rabbi, think of the new prophet of Nazareth? The Pharisees have covered up the Old Testament, the written law, with tradition, their oral law, for which they care far more. They have worked out pettifogging regulations for every detail of life. Religion for them has become the letter, not the spirit. Hypocrisy has taken the place of spiritual reality. The Messianic hope centers in a political deliverer from the yoke of Rome, who will make the whole world Jewish and Pharisaic. In this environment Jesus came. What will they do with him?

## THE BEGINNINGS

Every big river starts as a tiny rivulet in the hills. The birth of a son to the aged Zacharias and Elisabeth did create local interest among their neighbors in the hill-country near Hebron. Only these two knew what was to be; these two and Joseph and Mary up in Nazareth. It was the great secret, and the angel Gabriel helped them all to understand it and to keep it. The fact of the incarnation of Christ overshadows everything else in human history after man's creation. Without this fact there is no Christianity. This fact was a fact before any of the New Testament books were written. The New Testament did not invent it. This fact created the New Testament. One who has faith in God as Father, who sent his only begotten Son to earth as Redeemer from sin, finds nothing to disturb him in the hand

of God reached out in the case of the virgin birth of Jesus and his growing favor with God and man as he grew in stature. The sudden call of the Baptist in the wilderness by the Jordan woke Israel to the realization of the new era that had dawned. The two men of destiny—John and Jesus—met by the river brink, and God set his seal upon the Messianic ministry of his Son which had now begun. It is small wonder that the devil tried to ruin the mission of the Saviour at the very start. But Jesus had a sinless nature and was in constant fellowship with his Father. So he began his ministry with the dew of the morning on it, but he met instant opposition from the rabbis in Jerusalem.

## THE MAIN MINISTRY OF JESUS

It is not surprising that Jesus left Jerusalem and Judea for Galilee as the scene of his main work. In Galilee the people were less under the thumb of the Pharisees who had their headquarters in Jerusalem. The contact with the many Gentiles in Galilee made the Jews there less provincial and more open to new truth. Jesus had a revolutionary message to deliver, one that had its point of contact with the Old Testament prophets, not with the scribes of the day. John the Baptist was the last of these prophets who closed the old age and opened a new one. But Nazareth was not ready to be the home of the Messiah. Capernaum was hospitable at first till the people finally comprehended that Jesus would not be the political Messiah with a revolution against Rome. Then they turned away from a merely spiritual Messiah. But for a year or so the work of Jesus in Galilee stirred the country and roused the envy of the rabbis from Jerusalem, who soon sent spies up to Galilee to watch his work. They began to pick flaws with Jesus and his disciples, about his association with publicans and sinners, about not fasting at stated seasons, about healing on the Sabbath, about eating with unwashed hands, with anything and everything. So Jesus kept away from Jerusalem for the most part, and on each appearance here the animosity of the rabbis was more manifest. They wanted to kill him. Finally Jesus took the twelve apostles whom he had chosen away from Galilee to prepare them for the inevitable outcome—his death. He told them also of his resurrection on the third day, but they could not understand.

## THE CULMINATION

Finally Jesus faced Jerusalem with the full knowledge of what was before him. He had, after the start, refrained from making formal Messianic claims because he would be understood to be in opposition to Cæsar. So he employed other terms like the

Son of man, the Son of God, etc. But now Christ's hour had come, and Jesus in a public demonstration let the public from Galilee hail him as the Messiah. At the moment Jesus seemed to be master of the situation and overwhelmed all his opponents—Sanhedrin, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians—in a last debate in the temple. But Jesus knew that the triumph was only temporary. The Sanhedrin plotted his death still, and had the help of the treachery of Judas Iscariot to secure his arrest during the Passover feast. Jesus warned and comforted the apostles about his coming death and sought the Father's help in Gethsemane, but received none from the apostles, who finally fled and left him in the hands of the Sanhedrin. The trial, both ecclesiastical and civil, was a mockery, and the crucifixion the chief crime of all time. The Gospels tell this supreme tragedy with much detail and utmost dignity. The King died and was buried, and the kingdom of God was without hope in any human heart.

## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Certainly Christianity was dead with the dead Christ. Certainly it had a resurrection to life and to power, for it is today the chief spiritual power of earth. Why did it come back to life? The answer of the New Testament is very simple and clear. Jesus came out of the grave and appeared repeatedly to his disciples in Jerusalem and in Galilee, and renewed hope and faith and gave them the promise of the Father which came true ten days after his ascension, when the Holy Spirit came upon them. This explanation does explain it all. No other one comes anywhere near to doing so. Simply to say that faith in the resurrection of Jesus, or belief in a vision of Jesus did it, controverts all the facts. The disciples themselves were the skeptics who had to be convinced and who disbelieved the story of the women. The task of the risen Christ was precisely that of convincing skeptics like Thomas, for they were all like him. The two cardinal facts of Christianity are the incarnation of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. To be sure these are supernatural facts. But, if Christianity is only natural, it has nothing to offer that can help and save. Christianity stands or falls by Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man, who rose from the dead and now reigns with the Father in heaven.

## THE POWER OF PENTECOST

The transformation was complete from despair to hope, and even joy. There were some who doubted even when they saw the risen Christ. There are always some who doubt. But things

are done by those who believe, not by those who disbelieve. The Father kept his promise, as he always does. The Holy Spirit did come on Pentecost, and Peter stood up to interpret the life and work of Christ under the full inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It was the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, the new Paraclete, who still carries on and expounds to us the things of Christ. The change in the attitude and outlook of Simon Peter was amazing. Courage has driven out cowardice, and he faces prison and risks death without fear. Now he is able to see why God allowed Jesus to be crucified for our sins, but none the less he charges the Sanhedrin with being his murderers. Joel is called upon to throw light on these great events, and the hearts of men are smitten with conviction for sin. Right in Jerusalem, where the Sanhedrin had crucified Jesus, three thousand are converted and baptized in one day. The kingdom of God was not dead. The King was alive. He had laid upon his disciples the program for world conquest. Now he had given them the Holy Spirit for insight and for power to carry on that program. The same task rests upon us today. In fulfilling it we have the promise of the perpetual presence of the King himself.

## OPENING THE DOOR TO THE GENTILES

Jesus had said that they were to begin at Jerusalem, not to stay there. Power had come, but the disciples staid on. Sadducees laid hands on them for teaching in the case of Jesus the resurrection of the dead. But the Pharisees held aloof till Stephen showed how Christ was to be offered to the Gentiles, and how God could be worshiped by others save by Jews in Jerusalem. The combination of Pharisees and Sadducees compassed the death of Stephen, as it had done that of Jesus; but God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. He took the very young man Saul, who became the leader of the Pharisees in persecuting the disciples, and won him to Christ by an actual vision of the risen Redeemer. The whole situation is altered by this tremendous fact. Here was the most gifted man of his age, a scholar and a genius, on the side of Christ, who turns his guns on his former coworkers. The effect is electric, though the disciples in Jerusalem were slow to take to the new convert. But Barnabas played the man and took Saul's side. Peter is led to see that Romans like Cornelius in Cæsarea can be saved without becoming Jews. Barnabas with Saul finds Greeks at Antioch who become Christians, but not Jews. The Holy Spirit sends Barnabas and Saul on a great tour from Antioch to Cyprus, to Pamphylia, to Pisidia, to Lycaonia (south Galatia). The door of faith has now been fully opened to the Gentiles.

## PAUL AT GRIPS WITH THE HEATHEN AND THE JUDAIZERS

The heathen in various towns are stirred by the Jewish rabbis against Paul, who is now the leader of the crusade among the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas are challenged at Antioch by the Pharisaic element in the Jerusalem church, as Peter had been in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem Paul wins his great victory for Gentile freedom from the Jewish ceremonialism. He did not hesitate for a moment. Paul had the insight to see what was at stake in this great conflict and he saved spiritual Christianity for the race. He had the help of Peter, James (brother of Jesus), and John, but he had to keep up the fight and win back Peter, and even Barnabas, from a temporary lapse in Antioch. Paul never wavered. He was a man of great versatility and adaptability, but unmovable on matters of principle. His great epistles—1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans—ring with the echo of this controversy as Paul contends for justification by faith.

## PAUL IN ROME AND THE GNOSTIC HERESY

It is one of the tragedies in Paul's life that his effort in Jerusalem to placate the Jewish Christians against the slanders of the Judaizers led to his arrest by the Roman authorities. He did placate the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, but Jews from Ephesus raised a hue and cry that Paul was profaning the temple while in the very act of doing reverent worship in it. Over five years went by before Paul was set free from the results of this calumny. He escaped the mob, the Sanhedrin, and finally the schemes of Felix and Festus by his appeal to Rome, as he had a right to make. But the voyage led to disastrous shipwreck. In Rome Paul was used of God among the soldiers of the Prætorian camp, and he kept his eye on the new problem of Gnosticism in the East that threatened to overturn the churches at Colossæ, Hierapolis, and Ephesus. So he sends Epaphroditus with a letter to Philippi, and Tychicus and Onesimus with letters to Colossæ and Hierapolis (and Ephesus).

## PAUL THE PRISONER FOR CHRIST AND HIS DEATH

Fortunately Paul got free before the burning of Rome, in A. D. 64, else he would have been put to death then. Some scholars think that he did perish at this time. But the probability decidedly is that Paul was released. So we see him back in the East, then in the West (Spain), then in Crete, then Asia, and Macedonia, whence he writes to Timothy and to Titus. And now he is once more a prisoner in Rome, with the wrath of Nero, not so much of the Jews, as before. So he writes the

second letter to Timothy in full view of death which does come, but he does it in faith and courage and glad confidence.

### A GLANCE AT OTHER WORKERS

God uses both Peter and Paul, both Apollos and Barnabas, both James and John, both Onesimus and Philemon. We can be grateful for that. There is room for all of us with our varied gifts, few or many as the case may be. Personality is a large part of power in preaching and teaching. It is best for each of us to be himself and not try to imitate someone else. There is no one patent way of presenting Christ, if only one is loyal to Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

### THE CONFLICT AS SEEN FROM HEAVEN

Certainly Jesus sees the conflict on earth, even more: leads it from heaven. He said that he would be with us all the days. We may believe that other heavenly witnesses take interest in the race that we run (Heb. 12 : 1-3), but we know that Jesus watches us as we run toward him who is our goal. We are so prone to look at what goes on here purely from the earthly standpoint, and with earthly eyes, that it is helpful to get the view from heaven as we see it in the Apocalypse of John. The picture of a city from an aeroplane shows the whole. That is not possible from any street or house. So we need the cheer of Christ's call to us over the tumult of battle. Victory is certain and is near. Jesus himself is coming.

## PREPARING TO TEACH LESSON XIII

## REVIEW OF NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY

If one did careful work with each of the lessons, review is a pleasure. Thus one puts together the whole picture. Thus he sees the purpose running through the history in the Gospels, the Acts, the epistles, the Apocalypse. The New Testament books merely tell and interpret this story, each book in its own way. The story was there before the telling. John the Baptist cried out in the wilderness. Jesus lived and died and rose again. The Holy Spirit came and touched the hearts of the one hundred and twenty believers in the upper room. Soon Jerusalem, and finally the whole world, was filled with the story of Jesus Christ. That evangel rings through the New Testament and rings in our own hearts to the praise and the glory of God.